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THE
CORNHILL
MAGAZINE

JUL 5 1933

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EDITED BY
LORD GORELL



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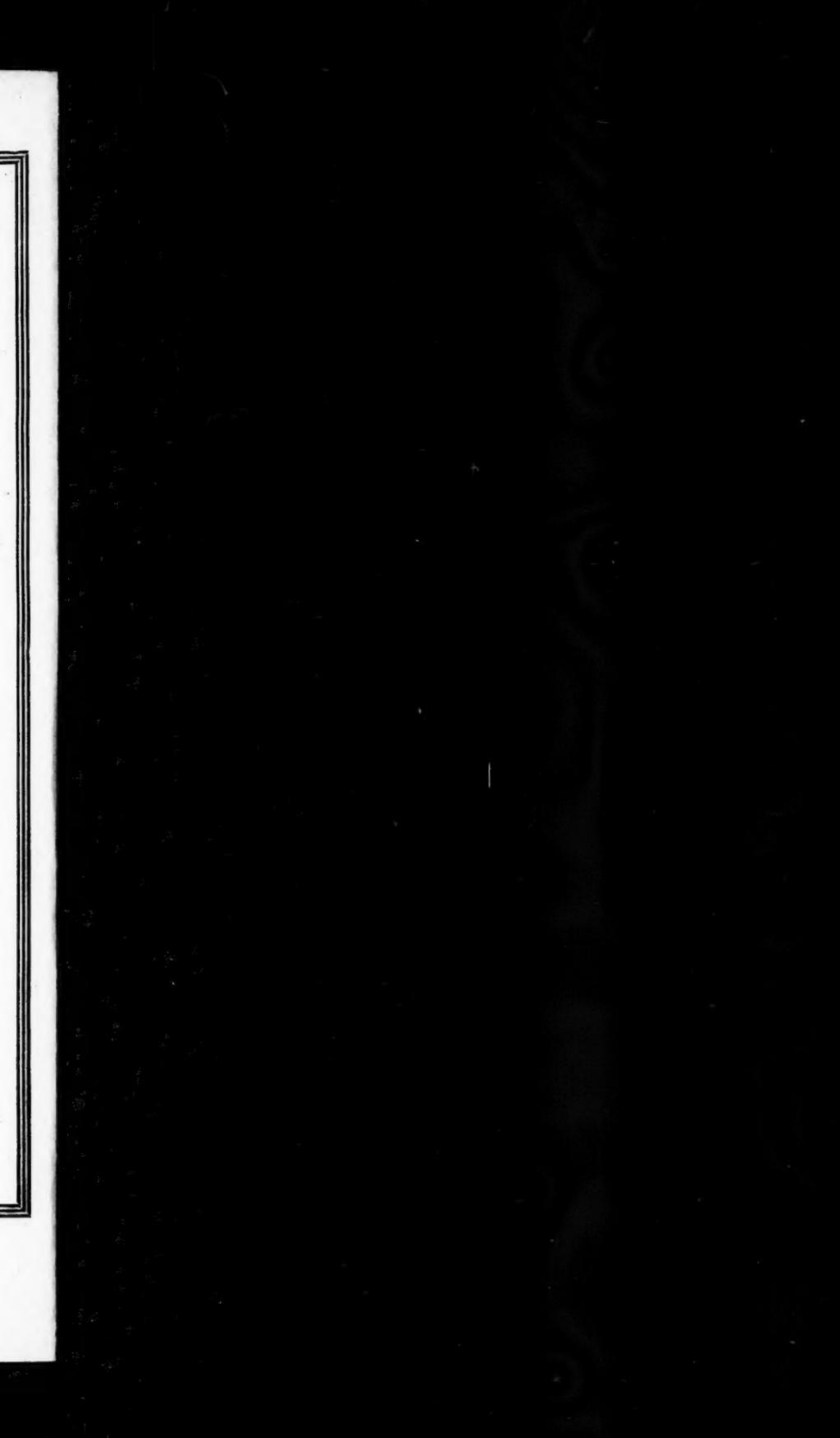
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THE
CORNHILL MAGAZINE.

JULY 1933.

FROM THE EDITOR'S CHAIR.

REGULAR readers of THE CORNHILL MAGAZINE will remember that the last contribution to be printed in these pages from the pen of Leonard Huxley, sole Editor since the death in 1917 of Reginald Smith, bore the above title—with a difference. With the courtesy habitual to him, that quality which especially endeared him to a long line of contributors, successful or unsuccessful in winning for their work acceptance at his hands, eminent or with their laurels yet ungathered, he added to the title the word ‘easy’ as a description of his Chair. It was, for him, an accurate description, born of long use and a great love for his work: it could not be accurate, if used by his successor. It is no easy Chair in which to sit, following on in the line of those who have filled it since the great reign of Thackeray, not many in number as those who read the memoir of Leonard Huxley by C. E. L. in the June issue will recall, but all men who, no matter what their individual differences of outlook and interest may have been, were imbued alike with a fervent desire to make and keep the CORNHILL a fortress of perennial interest and worth.

The changes that the earth has witnessed since the days of Thackeray are vaster than any that have ever visited it throughout all the preceding ages: scientific discoveries and mechanical inventions have rushed upon us and in almost every sphere of life altered our ways and our thoughts: even in the single editorial association of Leonard Huxley the transformation has been bewilderingly complete. Yet certain things remain like fixed stars—the spirit of adventure, however new the fields to which it now is given, poetry, at once the refuge and the inspiration of all the great forces which have ever moved mankind, delight in a good tale well told, and an eager curiosity for all that is real both in Life and in Literature. These things are still the heritage of the human mind, the best possessions it can carry with it in its passage down the years: these things embody the ambition of the old and yet new CORNHILL.

To carry them forward as they have been carried for so many years can never be an easy task. But it is a task which is all the more abundantly worth while because of the changes of the clam-

orous, hurrying world. There have been those who have been heard to declare in these rocking years after the War that this is the day of youth alone, just as formerly it was so generally asserted that it was necessary to be old in order to be wise : or again—since every age has had its advocates—it has been written, ‘in the middle-aged men who have kept their faith, lie the courage and purpose of the world.’ What is Truth ? Pilate’s question has received many an answer, widely differing, no one completely satisfying. There is no one answer : in the pages of the *CORNHILL* at any rate no one answer will be attempted. These will continue to be devoted to all ages and to all the varying interests and aspects of Life, to the wide conquests of the new and to the treasure-houses of the old. But they can present their answers to the great question but as their readers, at home and in the most distant parts of the earth, receive them and gather to give them strength.

I may, I hope, be permitted to believe that the *CORNHILL* has an individual voice in an age when individuality is not only rare but of special value. For a while the editorial drawer, to which he often half playfully referred, will bear the impress of Leonard Huxley’s mind—thereafter, it must be filled afresh, and associated in that task with me will be John Grey Murray, representative both of tradition and of youth. If, then, there is much to daunt, there is also much to encourage. One of the first letters which it fell to me to read in this Chair ended with the words, ‘what a joy the *CORNHILL* always is !’ Joy is of many kinds and the world to-day needs all its kinds : it is the world’s greatest need, it is the mother of every good gift. May the *CORNHILL* in the future, as in its distinguished past, continue to spread it abroad !

G.

THE LADIES OF THE OXFORD MOVEMENT.

BY WINIFRED F. PECK.

It may seem to those who commemorate the Centenary of the Oxford Movement this year that it is pre-eminently a memorial of great men. In the centre of the stage stands Manning, the young inscrutable widower, turning away from his girl-wife's grave : Newman, the celibate, leans weeping at the church-gate of Littlemore not for any earthly spouse but for his tarnished Bride, the Church of England. Casual visitors to Hursley saw Mrs. Keble only as an invalid, draped gracefully in shawls upon her couch. It was only 1839 when Dr. Pusey watched the white pall on his wife's coffin flutter in the wind as the bearers carried her to her grave in the cloisters of Christ Church. Only one woman really popularised the movement by her pen, and Charlotte Yonge hesitated to send her most popular stories to her publisher from her secluded country cottage until they had received the approval of her parents and clerical friends. A hundred years ago women were, for perhaps the last time in the story of our civilisation, content to be neither seen nor heard.

But that impression is superficial. No student of the literature or history of the early nineteenth century can fail to realise that one of the most interesting developments of the period is the change in the mental outlook of women. They reveal a Renaissance in feminine education hardly surpassed by that of the sixteenth century. No greater gulf lies between the doubtful hoydens of Henry VIII's early court and Lady Jane Grey, bent over her Greek and Latin studies, than between Catherine Morland in *Northanger Abbey* and Ethel May in the less classical but once popular story of *The Daisy Chain*. Pusey and Newman were in their nurseries when Miss Austen's dear little tomboy announced to the Tilneys at Bath that 'something very shocking was coming out in London presently,' and in the thirty years which followed a great many surprising things appeared in London and in England. Slowly, almost invisibly, the education of women had begun. Forces were at work in the country which, in that period, changed the mental outlook of the upper and middle classes. The Methodist, Quaker

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and Unitarian movements outside the Church, and the Evangelical reformers within, sobered and civilised the whole of English society save for the sordid and glittering Court of the Regency. The splendid dawn of Liberty in the French Revolution had passed, no less than the stories of its excesses, into a commonplace, universally accepted belief of the need for social freedom and reform. The Romantic movement had lifted the eyes of young England to the Lake hills and opened their ears to the romance of old, unhappy, far-off things. Printing was cheaper, books were multiplying; means of communication were enormously improved just before railways began. Even in Miss Austen's books themselves we can realise that, as she wrote thirteen years after the composition of *Northanger Abbey*, 'period, places, manners, books and opinions have undergone considerable changes.' Edmund Bertram takes a far more serious view of his clerical duties than Henry Tilney; Fanny Price and Anne Elliot both seek the consolations of literature as a balm for disappointed affections. If *Pride and Prejudice* had been written a few years later Mr. Bennet would have called all his daughters into the library to study every morning, and Mary might have been the heroine, not the butt, of the family.

For that was what was happening all over the country. Clergy and country gentry, possessed of a leisure almost unimaginable to us to-day, sat down to educate themselves, their children and their child-wives. The rich and worldly might engage governesses and patronise Miss Pinkerton's Academy, but everywhere the serious parents, and they were in the majority, set to work to instruct their children seriously. Such were the homes of the leaders in every school of thought, of the Arnolds and Cloughs, the Shaftesburys and Lytteltons, the Wilberforces, Bucklands, Macaulays, Trevelyan and Huxleys, no less than those of the Fabers, the Wards, the Wordsworths and Moberlys. It is therefore extraordinarily interesting to see how the ideals of the Movement itself influenced and illuminated these early Victorian homes.

And first and foremost we observe that there was no alteration in the nobler ideals of womanhood which the Tractarian ladies inherited from the past. The Oxford Movement was not revolutionary. In its essence it was conservative, for its aim was to guard truly and rigorously every law and custom of the Church, and it was only because so many laws and customs had fallen into disuse that the world looked upon its leaders as innovators. For

twenty years the English Prayer-Book, moulded here and there possibly into the form they desired, was the sole guide of its leaders. There was no endeavour to change the life or social ideals of the day : the object was to infuse every home with the new spirit. There was no revolution in the ideal of womanhood. A woman's first duty was still, to them, to obey her parents and her husband in all things spiritual and temporal. The only change lay in the fact that this submission was viewed by Churchwomen as the highest religious duty, demanding every effort of their brains and souls. The picture is presented most touchingly, and, to tell the truth, most exasperatingly, in the life of Mrs. Pusey. Brought up in one of the great country homes of the day, married after an engagement of ten years to the brilliant young scholar, she settled down in her pleasant drawing-room at Christ Church and proceeded to fill the nurseries above it with all the happiness of an ordinary wife and mother. But Pusey was no ordinary husband. One child died in infancy, his two daughters were far from robust, his only son, always delicate, was crippled and marked by phthisis from his youth. Mrs. Pusey was never strong, but austerity and severity were the notes of the home. England needed churches for the reformed doctrines and the churches needed money. The Puseys sold the carriages and horses which were as necessary to young couples then as the baby cars of to-day ; Mrs. Pusey sold all her jewels, daily services were instituted in the church, and who but Mrs. Pusey should attend them regularly ? The suspect Tractarians must show no less interest in good works and education than the Evangelicals, so Mrs. Pusey visited the sick and taught in a Sunday School. Mr. Pusey was always overwhelmed in work : it was natural that his wife should help him. She copied his manuscripts, she kept up her Latin and Greek in his service, she consulted authorities for him in the Bodleian ; she took a prominent share in collating the Tauchnitz text of St. Augustine with the Benedictine for her husband's contribution to the *Bibliotheca Patrum*. ' You and your delicate wife should not do this,' wrote a German scholar indignantly, and the same protest rises in the mind of the reader. ' It was so cold and dark with the snow that I took my Notes to the fireside to-day,' she writes apologetically. . . . ' From ten to five I worked at St. Augustine till I was interrupted by the children and some visitors.' That the work was due to her own choice and not to the exactions of her husband is clear from the fact that she began on her own account

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a Commentary on St. Matthew, and worried herself in her spare moments as to whether her Baptism, by a dissenting minister, were valid. But when Dr. Liddon remarks that 'the growth of Mrs. Pusey's character after eleven years of married life was remarkable and testified to her husband's influence,' the modern reader feels that his neglect for her physical welfare, till she succumbed to her last illness, is no less striking. His mother, it is true, belonged to the same stern school. 'She was always quiet, humble and cheerful,' he writes of Lady Lucy Pusey. 'Even when she was old and ill she never allowed herself to lie down during the day or even to lean back in a chair.' When Mrs. Pusey's health gave way he was heart-broken. After her death it was years before he re-entered her drawing-room : thirty-five years later he recalled the agony as he watched the wind blow about her pall in the May sunshine against the mellow walls of Tom Quad, and spoke of 'eleven years of scarcely earthly happiness,' but it is impossible not to feel that a little reasonable relaxation might have doubled or trebled those eleven years.

Few indeed rivalled the severities of the Puseys' home, but Miss Yonge's novels, the repository of the social history of the Movement, are full of dutiful wives who wore themselves out in the service of their husbands and the Church. Not a few of them took to their sofas in self-protection, but on their sofas they remained always the Heart of the Home. 'She is my conscience, my memory and my common-sense,' wrote Keble of his wife, and 'for twenty years of health and fifty of sickness,' he says of his sister, 'she was always at hand and within reach, and never a look nor a word that I knew of but was kind and wise with the true kindness and true wisdom.' Never more touchingly perhaps is the attitude expressed than in a letter from the child-wife of George Ridding, written from her new little home at Oxford, 'beside the beautiful stand of flowers George has given me for my drawing-room with two geraniums, a heliotrope and deep purple cineraria.' 'Every month that we have been married I have been growing happier and happier, knowing my dear husband better and therefore loving and reverencing him more and more. And he teaches me and helps me to be good in such a kind gentle way.' That was the typical attitude, and in two of the most popular of Miss Yonge's novels, *Heartsease* and *The Heir of Redcliffe*, we see how clearly the authoress felt that a wife superior in mental or even spiritual qualities to her husband should disguise the fact as far

as possible from the outer world and her own consciousness. It is not till 1845 that the story of a wife leading the way for her husband strikes the reader with a note of novelty. Mrs. William Ward sat in her cottage at Rosehill beside her brilliant incorrigible husband, the *enfant terrible* of the Movement, the greatest intellect, perhaps, of his time, shortly after the bitter day when he was publicly deprived of his degrees in the crowded Sheldonian for the publication of his treatise on the Ideal of a Christian Church. She was copying an article for their friend, Mr. Newman, for the Press, when she broke down altogether. 'I cannot stand it,' she cried. 'I shall go and be received into the Catholic Church!' She went, and Ward went with her, but that is the only occasion on which a woman's voice is heard, making an individual and independent decision in those early days.

But these Victorian ladies were not only wives, they were, in that prolific generation, devoted mothers. From them we hear, naturally, none of those rebellious sentiments which startle the reader in the diaries of eighteenth-century ladies. They accepted motherhood as a vocation, and devoted themselves to the spiritual and secular education of their over-crowded nurseries. 'Another little treasure has been added to my store,' writes the wife of a Church dignitary to Mrs. Arnold, after the arrival of her fourteenth baby. 'Another little soul given to me to bring up in the fear of God!' . . . 'Ah, my quiver is full indeed!' cries a consumptive curate joyfully, in Miss Yonge's *Pillars of the House*, when the twins who bring the number of his arrows up to thirteen are presented to him on his death-bed. It was not so much families as clans which were raised in Oxford homes, country vicarages and cathedral closes. Never again, probably, will the world see homes like those, with their ranks of children and faithful and long-suffering servants, their carefulness in spiritual and casualness in physical hygiene, their scanty entertainments and perennial enjoyments. Those of an older generation who can remember visits to old-fashioned grandparents know those houses still; through the widely opened doors we can see the serviceable wallpaper of the hall and drawing-room, the carpets that stretched inexorably to the skirting-boards, the crimson rep curtains and table-covers, the solid sensible furniture not yet vulgarised by Mid-Victorian clumsiness. We know the dark engravings of Raphael's prints on the walls, the acres of sober books in vast book-shelves, (ten tons of books accompanied the new Bishop of Lincoln on his removal thither in the sixties), the

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bead fender-stool and fire-screens, the college groups, and the microscope and albums on the round table. Above the portentous bedrooms of parents and guests on the first floor the rooms grew smaller and barer, and here each child had its own tiny home for its treasures, the rare books, the collections of birds'-eggs and shells and moths which took the place of our expensive toys. Up there was the threadbare schoolroom with its hard chairs and one vast comfortable sofa, and not far away were the big nurseries with a battered rocking-horse which had to carry three children at once, a fire-guard where baby clothes were always airing, the dreaded medicine-chest and an unchanging Nana in her rocking-chair. To those nurseries the slender, straight-backed little mothers ascended every morning to teach Bible stories and prayers to the babies as soon as they could talk. In the schoolroom below they reigned supreme till an older daughter could share the task. 'We have determined on relinquishing our governess and trying the plan of educating our children ourselves,' writes the wife of the Master of Pembroke, Mrs. Jeune. 'I believe we are very hard to please and that no female, scarcely, would teach as my husband considers well.' Almost every biography and novel of the day presents the picture. The little Wordsworths were set down to Prideaux's *Old and New Testament History*, followed by French and Italian: Miss Yonge and her numerous families of cousins sat at work with their mothers, morning by morning. If the actual education was one-sided and often interrupted, it was continued when the great bell rang and the vast family assembled for midday dinner round the big table in the dining-room. For by then the papers had arrived and the news of the day was discussed in all high seriousness. From their earliest days they had to take an intelligent interest in politics, social reform and above all, the Church. To them the Tracts, the Bampton lectures, the Gorham controversy and the official censures passed on Pusey and Ward, the tragedies of the secession of Newman in 1845 and Manning in 1851 were events in the history of the world. It was only when the lamps were lit in the drawing-room after tea that this high seriousness relaxed a little, and history and poetry and the novels of Sir Walter Scott entranced these children of a sterner day, as they sorted their collections and wrote appropriate Latin names beneath their specimens. There were indeed real incentives to culture within the Movement itself. The houses of Bloxam, the naturalist, and Johnson, the astronomer, were open always to their kindred spirits in Church

affairs. Two Professors of poetry adorned their ranks, Isaac Williams and John Keble. The poetry of the *Christian Year* satisfied its own generation too completely to make much appeal to our own, but those verses, so impregnated with the atmosphere of the English country church and rectory, were the voice of the Tractarians to England at large. In the homes thus described the lines of Keble rose naturally to the lips in every family event. To their stories of adventure were added also the romance of the Mission-field, for the Movement was not slow to form a Mission of its own.

They were cultured and happy, and they were united homes. The age of reactionary children was yet to come, and the clans who issued from these homes, Wordsworths and Selwyns, Freres and Churches, Johnsons and Ottleys, Fabers and Moberlys, were all inspired by that defensive loyalty against a critical and hostile world which the families of martyrs habitually exhibit. 'We must be content to live and die suspected,' wrote Dean Church, and it is in days of prosperity rather than adversity that children are critical.

'The Ark of God is in the field
Like clouds around the alien armies sweep,'

sang Keble. The homes of the Tractarians were essentially loyal, the devoted instructions of gentle wives and mothers not in vain. Nor was there in these homes any of the emotionalism which children dread. Consistency and self-control were virtues prized above all others. This is not perhaps the place in which to speak of the depth of their spiritual lives and the serenity of their intercourse with the unseen. We can perhaps estimate it most clearly as we remember that they lived in a world where illness was never removed hastily to the fastnesses of Nursing Homes, and where pain and suffering and death had to be met without the mitigations of anaesthetics and trained nurses. The gentle ladies, who seem so inefficient to modern eyes, rose heroically to the call. In their diaries they accept death as submissively as they accepted life; over the sick-beds and graves of their children they kept their faith with God.

But their lives do not only exhibit heroism. They reveal also, charmingly and absurdly, the refinement and gentility of Perfect Ladies, in those far-off days when there was nothing humorous about those phrases. The Oxford Movement was the first of the religious revivals of the preceding fifty years not to demand sever-

ance from the world. Methodists and Evangelicals, Quakers and Unitarians shut themselves off from the ordinary pleasures of society. The Tractarians carried their high standards with them into the outer world. Their young people were allowed to go to dances and theatres, and their own high principles were trusted to keep them from the dangers of gambling and drunkenness. Not even their enthusiastic desire for learning, nor their good works, were allowed to interfere with a proper care for dress, decorum and social amenities. 'I don't think,' says one of Miss Yonge's heroines, 'that dear Mamma would ever have let your Greek and Latin and Cocksmoor School interfere with all the little lady-like things.' The days of practical housewifery were, unfortunately for England, over in the upper and middle classes. (Mrs. Bennet, we may remember, assured Mr. Collins with some asperity that she was very well able to keep a good cook, and that her daughters had nothing to do in the kitchen.) But the Tractarian Movement spread all the more quickly through the country because its members played an ordinary part in society, and in their homes young girls were found watering the flowers, tending the bird-cages, practising at the pianoforte and embroidering their little collars. There is no more delightful picture of the true early Victorian lady than that given by her daughters of Mrs. Moberly, wife of the head-master of Winchester, who was preferred in later life to the see of Salisbury. She was a woman of the deepest spiritual convictions and self-denying life: she had fifteen children and met many great sorrows with saintly courage. Yet, we hear:

'She was beautiful and possessed a most characteristic love of beautiful things. Her dress was always of the best materials and she insisted on having it sewn with silk on both sides; when we asked her irreverently what difference it would make whether silk or cotton was used she would reply: "I should know it was cotton and I should not like that." . . . She loved to be surrounded with flowers but they were all carefully chosen for their sweetness and colouring; ordinary garden flowers gave her no especial pleasure, and even as little children we only offered her roses or scented geranium, verbena or mignonette. . . . Her rooms had an indefinable fragrance of lavender and violets about them; bottled scents were far too coarse for her. . . . Her wrath at being subjected to such smells as gas, coal-smoke and lamp-oil was strong and despairing. . . . If possible she would never touch a penny and if it could not be avoided, hurried to wash her hands;

she always washed the silver or gold coins before giving them in the offertory. . . . She was extremely shy and reserved. During the first year of her married life she managed not to call her husband anything, and as soon as Alice could speak, adopted her name of Papa from that time forward. . . . Her rule over her many sons and daughters was quiet, equal and very firm but not demonstrative. . . .

'I see,' wrote a Wykehamist on her death, 'how her high ideal and personal beauty impressed me with a certain awe which had its charm.' . . . 'Amused,' says her daughter, 'as we were at her dainty fancies we recognised that they imparted an air of exceeding refinement.'

It is in this rarefied air that the heroes and heroines of Miss Yonge's novels lived and moved to her readers. It is not in this world that we must look for revolutionary sentiments of universal brotherhood or the breaking down of the barriers between classes. All her characters, including even the consumptive curate, are well-born and well-connected, however poor they may be. They would not dream of pursuing the Rich and the Great: they would not dream of neglecting the poor or failing in their duties to the sick-beds and schools of the villagers. But a gentle air of class consciousness, if not of snobbery, pervades their atmosphere as evasively yet definitely as the musk in their garden borders. It would be easy to study one novel after another without discovering that tradespeople or the vast lower middle classes of England existed. The society of the day was of course exclusive with an intensity it is hard to imagine. Whigs and Tories might refuse to meet: in Oxford itself the Heads of the Colleges and their wives knew no one outside their charmed circles. 'It was so strange and pleasant,' remarks Mrs. Jeune, 'to hear people asking at a dinner party who the other guests might be.' Evangelicals and Tractarians often refused to meet. None of Miss Yonge's heroes made as great a sacrifice as the (well-born) lad who became a bookseller. 'There is,' wrote Miss Yonge to a friend, 'a much larger amount of people who don't come into contact with University folk, and it is the great disadvantage of the modern girl that the Curate instead of being her hero is often her inferior in social standing!' From their portraits and miniatures the ladies of the day gaze forth, aware of Heaven and of Hell, of God's poor and their own connections and dependants, of the heathen over the seas, and sublimely unconscious of the rest of the world around them.

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Of the development of the Oxford Movement itself and of the children and grandchildren of the Tractarian leaders who grew up to call themselves Anglo-Catholics, this article cannot attempt to speak. The obvious results of their upbringing were, on the one hand, the desire of the more spiritual to retreat from the world into religious communities, and on the other to use their education and influence independently in the world without. Both these movements were later developments. It was not till 1845 that four ladies under Miss Langston, 'who never spared herself or others,' were consecrated 'with tears of joy' to form a Sisterhood in Park Village. The story of the Anglican Communities, and of many lives of heroic self-denial and effort, belong to the later half of the nineteenth century.

The history of those other women, or rather of their descendants who emerged into the world, is still in the making. It was, to the older people of their own day, a story of the same lawlessness and undisciplined love for extremes which marked the development of the Oxford Movement itself, though very few of them lived to see the strange victories women have won and the stranger uses to which they have put their triumphs. But they had to realise that improvements in education would lead to a new freedom for women, and, in this new liberty, they saw girls throw aside refinements and restraints, burst into athletics and clamour for openings in the world. In so far as the early Tractarians saw the problem of surplus women at all, they saw them happily occupied as hand-maidens of the Church. That was a favourite phrase of Miss Yonge's, but before her death she was to hear of girls at High Schools and Women's Colleges, girls on bicycles and girls on hockey fields. 'I know,' she writes in a letter, 'of several cricket matches, and one poor girl wrote in the greatest distress to ask me how to manage about a cricket match where gentlemen were to play!' . . . 'I even hear of girls using the word "beastly" in confidential moments. . . . I also hear of rompings, chiefly in High Life, I regret to say.' Only the strongest and most broad-minded of the old school could face the new world.

One of these, known to many successive generations in Oxford, has only left us recently. Dame Elizabeth Wordsworth lived to her ninetieth year. She was a child when Newman left Littlemore, she could remember the consternation caused by Manning's secession to Rome. In her home at the Head-master's lodge at Harrow and later in his Palace at Lincoln, she grew up in the

authentic spirit of the Tractarian school. 'Here's dear Miss Wordsworth,' said the Head of an Oxford College, 'trying to make a bridge between her Father and the Modern world.' Because, in her own personality, she revealed so clearly the vistas at the distant side of that bridge this article may be forgiven for paying some tribute to her memory. She belonged to one of the large and intellectually distinguished families of the period: she was educated and educated herself at home in blissful ignorance of examinations or certificates. She had grown up in a home where public affairs and every movement in literature or science or social reform had been readily and critically discussed: she had never been absorbed in a purely feminine circle. She grew up also to assume the virtues of self-control, self-denial and consistency as the normal make-up of a reasonable human being. She did not so much distrust emotion as laugh at it. It was only with some reluctance that she left her home when she was invited to become Principal of a College for Women at Oxford. The leaders of the Anglo-Catholic party, having recognised reluctantly that higher education for women was an inevitable blessing, decided to do their best to ally it with the Church, but Miss Wordsworth received no undue encouragement in the home circle. 'If,' said her brother, the Bishop of Salisbury, 'I thought your not going would put an end to the whole thing I should say, Don't go: but as I don't suppose it will, I think you had better accept.' Probably in her heart of hearts Miss Wordsworth never viewed the University of Oxford as anything but a beneficent and tolerant host to her handful of girls at Lady Margaret Hall. She was never a feminist or an anti-suffragette, for to her the world consisted primarily of human beings, distinguished by individual characters rather than by sex. She eluded parties and labels with a mischievous craftiness. She met hot-headed rebels from home and girl fanatics in religion or politics with just that kindly humour which pierces their armour most effectively. From first to last she considered home the best place for a woman and marriage the best life for a woman, even while she rejoiced in the triumphs of those who were obliged to make their own way in the world. 'Our patron saint,' she declared of Lady Margaret, 'was a gentlewoman, a scholar and a saint, and after being three times married she took a vow of celibacy. What more could be expected of any woman!' The writer of her memoirs will only be able to explain her sense of proportion, her extraordinary sincerity and humour, her delightful prejudices and real scholarship, her feminine

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adroitness and her spiritual gifts if he or she studies the home and generation from which she sprang.

She was one of the Ladies of the Oxford Movement, and nothing ranges her more accurately in the ranks of those fair, submissive, dauntless little ladies than her choice of a motto for the Hall dining-room. A group of the portentous girl students of the nineties were suggesting, no doubt, ostentatious and ambitious sentiments, when Miss Wordsworth, with her sudden smile and quick enthusiasm, made a choice of her own. 'Study to be quiet and do your own business' were the words she chose for the independent and rebellious woman of the day. That was the motto of the wives and mothers of a hundred years ago, of those ladies who had no Rights and such unbounded influence. As they flit from our vision through their sunny rectory gardens across the quiet churchyards, there may be some who regret those ideals of dutifulness, self-effacement and gentle reticence which vanished with them from the world.

THE BULB.

BY F. H. DORSET.

'LET me see,' remarked Anthony Baxter, peering across the bulb-counter with short-sighted eyes. 'I want fifty *Galanthus Nivalis*, two dozen *Scilla Siberica*, twenty-five *Tulipa Gesneriana*, mixed, twelve *Ranunculus Asiaticus*, a dozen *Convallaria Maialis*, twenty-four *Narcissi Albus Planus Adoratus* and that peculiar big spotted bulb which might be anything on earth.' He indicated the bulb in question with a long finger.

The young lady in charge of the counter in the Woolworth store looked at him reproachfully and wiped her nose delicately as she waited for him to translate his needs. The labels appended to the various divisions before her were inadequately inscribed to cope with this linguistic demand, and besides the young man was obviously trying to be funny, showing off before the young woman who accompanied him. What with a cold in the head, mixed bulbs, the smell of scent and humanity, and the remorseless day-long persistency of the gramophone just across the room, where people tried out records, the young lady in Woolworth's did not feel disposed to suffer fools gladly. So, although maintaining a polite attention, she wiped her nose and waited.

The other young lady at the young man's side called him somewhat peremptorily to order.

'Don't try to be funny, Tony, for pity's sake,' she adjured. 'Let's finish buying the beastly bulbs and get home. What we want is fifty Snowdrops, two dozen Scilla, the same of mixed Tulips, a dozen ordinary Ranunculus roots, the same of Lilies of the Valley if you've got 'em there, and two dozen double white Narcissi.'

'And the Spotted-Dog bulb,' persisted the irritating Anthony. 'It looks interesting. What is it, by the way?'

'It's a lily,' said the girl behind the counter, vaguely, beginning to count Snowdrop bulbs into a paper bag.

'A lily,' repeated Anthony. 'Which kind of lily? *Regale*, *Formosanum*, *Candidum*—or just Tiger? It looks a bit Tigrish. Never mind. "A rose by any other name would smell as sweet." Shove it in with the rest.'

' You'll get roses at the next counter,' said the girl severely, bagging Scillas. ' How many tulips did you say ? '

' Two dozen,' said Anthony's companion briskly, ' mixed Darwins. Tony, you're a fool. If we don't hurry up we shan't get home before Elsa arrives. Here, you carry the things and I'll pay for them.' She slung a large shopping-basket on the young man's arm and produced her purse.

' Twelve Ranunculus. No Lilies of the Valley here to-day. Two dozen double white Narcissi,' chanted the bulb girl nasally.

Anthony handed her the basket and watched her wedge and stow the items into it.

' You say that bulb's just a lily,' he remarked pleasantly, ' but I'm still waiting to know what *kind* of a lily. It seems to have got lost, lying there among these hyacinth bulbs.'

' Well,' replied the girl resignedly, ' it does seem to have got out of place, somehow, and that's why I can't rightly tell you what it is, save that it looks like a lily.'

' Ah ! ' said Anthony. ' It *looks* like a lily, but I see you are not prepared to swear even to that. Well, it's not an onion, at any rate, and there's something subtly attractive about those black spots. Hand it over. I'll carry it separately, in my pocket.'

He turned to the girl at his side.

' Phyllis, while you toil in the garden with your *Galanthus Nivalis* and so on I shall spend a happy hour planting my bulb in a bowl and watching it grow.'

' Don't behave like a silly ass,' rejoined Phyllis. ' But anyhow that'll be a shade more like gardening on your part than merely reading seedsmen's catalogues. Come on ! '

Anthony took up his burden, winked at the saleswoman as she turned to attend to another customer, and followed in his sister's wake past the Stationery, Toys, and Jewellery counters out into Sparrowfield High Street and an October afternoon.

The Baxters, brother and sister, had inhabited Coburg House, Albert Avenue, for eight weeks, during which period Anthony had been deeply immersed in the interior decoration and restoration of a sadly neglected Victorian villa while Phyllis energetically cleared, trimmed, and reorganised an overgrown garden covering a whole quarter of an acre. No one had wanted Coburg House for quite a long time, and it was far too big for two people, but the Sanitary Inspector passed the drains as in good order, the walls and roof were stout, the rooms—ignoring a basement now dedicated to

storage—were large and cheerful, and Elsa Marlowe was coming to join them, companion-secretary, Pekinese, maid and all, as soon as the throes of redecoration were over and the place in order. Then she was going to take five of the twelve rooms off their hands and convert them into a species of flat. Meantime, now that the paint-pots and step-ladders had been removed, she was coming with her small entourage to dwell for a while as guest with the Baxters while engaged in furnishing her own quarters. Elsa had lived so long in hotels and boarding-houses that she lacked household gods of her own. Now, at last, the roaming restless years which had followed her husband's death in China were ending. Mrs. Marlowe intended to settle down with the young cousins for whom, alone of all her relations, she really entertained some affection.

The young cousins themselves viewed the prospect with mixed feelings, but, as Phyllis the practical remarked finally, one must cut one's coat according to one's cloth. The death of their parents had left them each with a small fixed income, and Providence had endowed Anthony with chronic asthma, apt to fall upon him in sudden devastating attacks, thereby effectually stopping his chances of remunerative employment in an era when unemployment was rife. He had, however, literary and artistic leanings which were gradually being turned to some account, and Phyllis had decided that it was certainly her duty to look after him and foster these abilities. Her own were entirely practical and domestic. She had sampled office-work after a course of typing and shorthand, but loathed it with deep loathing and gladly turned her back on it for mere domestic life. Marriage might or might not come her way. Poor Anthony, anyhow, could never marry, and he must be looked after. The air of Sparrowfield was recommended for asthma, and six months in rooms in the locality had produced marked improvement in his health. A well-built sunny substantial house with a garden sufficiently large and secluded to give an illusion of pure country was desirable, and Elsa's suggestion made its acquirement possible. Anyhow, when all the arrangements were complete, she would have her own flat, and Anthony need not see too much of her; which would, perhaps, be as well; for there were moments when Phyllis experienced an uneasy conviction that Elsa Marlowe, twenty years Anthony's senior and six years a widow, had designs on Anthony, asthma and all. Of course they had certain intellectual interests in common, and Elsa

wrote clever incomprehensible articles on queer subjects for ultra-highbrow periodicals, which Miss Hogg typed out for her. Still, that alone was a poor foundation for matrimony, and it was fortunate that Anthony showed no inclination that way. Phyllis felt herself to be competent to deal with that danger, and both she and her brother had become enamoured at first sight with solid, deliciously Philistine, Coburg House.

They boarded a 'bus in the High Street and Phyllis glanced at her brother a trifle anxiously as they sat side by side. He was going through one of his facetious restless teasing moods which always marked his uneasy awareness of an impending attack. There was something gallant and pitiful in the way he faced up to fate and threw at it the toy crackers of his wit. This being so he could be forgiven a certain puerility and elaboration in his jokes, which assorted oddly with his real undoubted abilities. Sport and games and a dozen healthy outlets for energy were denied him. It was rotten hard luck, and it spoke volumes for old Tony's nature that, though often impish, he was never bitter or sour. Fighting for breath, even, he could usually contrive a smile and a silly jest. Of such silliness is built the heroism of weakness. Poor old blessed Tony ! Phyllis was no sentimentalist, but she found it hard to imagine that she could ever love anyone better than her brother. Nobody should ever hurt Tony if she could help it. A little jeering and goading did him good, but only a little. She was sorry now that she had asked him to carry that heavy basket with all those other things in it besides the bulbs, but then he would have insisted on carrying it in any case.

The 'bus stopped, and they climbed down at Albert Avenue, where Victorian Sparrowfield began to merge into Edwardian, which, in turn, blended with the many new almost jaunty roads lined with Georgian post-war habitations. At the door of Coburg House stood a taxi, and the daily maid who attended to the Baxter housework, was superintending, together with Elsa Marlowe's Johnson, the passage of various boxes into the house.

'Damn !' said Phyllis. 'Either we're late or Elsa's early.' She hurried on ahead, while Anthony followed at a more leisurely pace.

Anthony, as a matter of fact, was in no hurry to encounter his cousin Elsa. When he was feeling reasonably fit he was apt to find her company stimulating and enlightening. Her travels and the slightly illogical variations of her mind and conversation at

once amused him and quickened within him his own creative impulse towards artistic self-expression ; but a little of Elsa went rather a long way. Once he was well launched upon his own concentrated work he found her disintegrating, more especially when, as now, he was conscious of that ominous drawing-together of his own vital nervous forces which he knew heralded a physical tussle with his old enemy. When this fresh round of his perpetual contest was over, and he recovered strength and wind, he would, perhaps, enjoy Elsa's company, but not just now. He wished that she had not arrived until the first wheezing onslaught of his ailment had sent him into the justified fastness of his own room from whence Phyllis could be trusted to exclude her. However, the event could not be helped, and for this evening, at any rate, he would have to be pleasant and polite. There was always one compensating fact about Elsa ; though elderly she was beautiful, and she knew how to dress. If only she would keep quiet Anthony knew that he could derive a true aesthetic pleasure from simply watching her ; but Elsa's quiet moods were infrequent except when she shut herself up amid a barrage of books to write one of her strange semi-occult articles on theosophy or folklore. He always wondered how much of these she really produced from her own intellectual equipment and how much by means of transmogrified 'scissors and paste.' A bit of the charlatan about Elsa, somewhere, but also something of a gypsy's charm. She and her botanical husband, in whom mingled elements of the adventurer and man of science, had roamed the odd corners of the world together during ten years of married life ; he collecting plants, she, God knew what in the way of esoteric information concerning the cults and habits of the human race. Anthony wondered whether Elsa would really settle down in Sparrowfield. Probably her flat in Coburg House would serve as a mere *pied-à-terre* between periodic roamings.

Inside the house Elsa, having decanted herself out of an opulent fur coat and placed her Pekinese in an armchair (whence he surveyed his new surroundings with apparent disapproval), was rapidly apologising.

'I'm nearly an hour earlier than I said I'd be, but something happened,' she explained. 'A horrid little man turned up at the hotel, a little man John and I once met, abroad. I saw him arrive and I didn't want to meet him again ; so I scuttled out as soon as he'd disappeared aloft. So we caught an earlier train. I knew you wouldn't mind.'

'Of course not. We'll have tea at once, I expect you'll be glad of it.' Thus Phyllis. Elsa turned to Anthony.

'Anthony,' she said, 'I'm going to have a heavenly time, furnishing. This is going to be home for me, after all these years of wandering, and you'll have to advise me. Take me up to see my quarters, now they're all papered, won't you, and tell me if you think I can get all the things I want to get into them.'

'Anthony'll go round with you after tea, Elsa,' said Phyllis decidedly. 'We've been scrambling about in the Town shopping, and he ought to rest a bit.'

Elsa nodded.

'All right. I'll go and dump my things in my bedroom.'

Phyllis accompanied her to the spare room, and Anthony slowly divested himself of his overcoat. The small paper bag containing the lily bulb crackled in a pocket as he did so, and for a moment he hesitated. Elsa knew a good deal about plants, having collected knowledge from the deceased John, and she might be able to tell him just what kind of lily the odd bulb might be.

On the other hand, she had always avoided the subject of botany and even of horticulture since her husband's death, and once he had seen her turn, shuddering, from a bed of swaying white lilies. 'Don't speak to me of lilies!' she had exclaimed then, 'John lost his life for a lily, and I hate the very name of them!' That was true. John Marlowe had perished rather mysteriously in a remote corner of China whilst questing for some new discovery in *Liliaceæ*. So perhaps it would not be quite tactful, even now, to ask her opinion regarding the speckled bulb. Were lily bulbs of any species ever speckled?

Anthony hung up his coat and put the bulb in a drawer of his writing-desk in the small room which had once been a house-keeper's room and therefore boasted much built-in shelving protected by sliding doors. He had annexed this apartment instantly on entering Coburg House, and already most of its cupboard-space was filled with the paraphernalia of his hobbies and piles of manuscript. One fair-sized cupboard alone remained empty, waiting for those bowls of bulbs planted in fibre which Phyllis would presently place there, to be brought out into the daylight in ordered sequence. He decided to plant his particular bulb in a bowl, too. Then, even if health and weather prevented his pottering about in the garden, he could still watch it grow and see what it turned out

to be. If unsuitable for permanent poticulture it could be transplanted to the garden in the early spring.

He closed the drawer upon it, and went into the dining-room to have tea and make himself pleasant to Elsa and her companion-secretary, Miss Hogg.

Miss Hogg was one of nature's unfortunates. She was not merely plain, she was ugly, and endowed with a name almost terribly suitable to her appearance, which was that of a somewhat stout pig of sallow complexion. Nevertheless, Anthony liked Miss Hogg, with a liking which had developed by slow degrees during an acquaintanceship of nearly six years. He had come to feel that humanity in general did her an injustice, classing her too rapidly among the nonentities, and, casually, he had learnt enough of her early life to trace cause and effect in her present condition. Miss Hogg was nearly forty. Her parents, ill-assorted and old, but still together, lived in a condition of genteel poverty and senile jangling somewhere in the Midlands, and her childhood had been overshadowed with a double knowledge of domestic unhappiness and her own excessive plainness, two factors which bred in the child and young girl a painful self-consciousness which had prevented her from reaping the full benefit of even an inadequate high-school education. She had emerged into adult life, and the necessity for self-support, equipped with a knowledge of shorthand and typing, but with very little self-confidence and no intimate friends; her ugliness uncompensated for, even from a business point of view, by any great official capacity or any a self-assertive personality. Therefore when, by means of an employment agency, she encountered Elsa Marlowe, and actually secured a post with her as personal secretary, Miss Hogg experienced a relief and gratitude to Heaven which had up-borne her ever since. Secretly she did not much like Mrs. Marlowe, and certain of the manuscripts which she industriously typed filled her with puzzled misgivings as to their exact significance. Others Mrs. Marlowe typed herself, not entrusting the manuscript to her companion. Still, on the whole she did not prove unkind, and as Letitia Hogg found her feet more securely among her fellow-humans she began to acquire confidence and a capacity for quiet observation. The fears and isolations, the hidden mental hungers and spiritual frustrations of Letitia's early life, had also borne another and more vital fruit. There were moments when Anthony half-suspected that Miss Hogg, in the simplicity and sincerity of her soul, habitually

walked in and out of mystic doors closed to the majority of mankind.

The average observer, however, saw in Mrs. Marlowe's companion a rather silent, nervous, pig-like woman, a perfect foil for her employer's animated, if mature, beauty.

Anthony went in to tea. After tea he accompanied Elsa and Miss Hogg about their empty newly-painted rooms, making suggestions concerning furniture and draperies, while Miss Hogg wrote down industrious notes. Shortly after supper he began to wheeze, and for a week thought no more of bulbs.

He came downstairs, weak but once more breathing naturally, on a day of fugitive autumn sunshine. In his den he discovered Phyllis, busy at the central deal table where he sometimes engaged in handicrafts. She had spread newspaper, produced numerous bowls, and set out a neat array of bulbs in groups ready for planting. At his entrance she looked up apologetically.

'Hello!' she said. 'I didn't expect you down so soon this morning, or I wouldn't have made this mess in here.'

'It doesn't matter. I rather like watching other people work. Are these the things we bought last week?'

'Oh no! Those are out in the garden. These are selected, for the house. Extra specially good.'

He sat down by the table, idly watching her, as she deftly arranged plants and fibre. Conspicuous among the rest stood two large, rather deep, green glazed bowls, one of which she now began to fill.

'What are you putting in those?' he asked, fingering a bulb.

'I'm filling these two with early things. I want to have 'em ready to put on the table at Christmas, one at each end. There'll be the miniature tree in the middle of the table as usual of course, with the little presents, like mother always arranged it, but I thought those two bowls would give a nice decorative touch.'

'What are you putting in 'em?'

'A thick circle of those little white Roman hyacinths and an extra big double blue hyacinth in the middle. If we start them in the dark and bring them out to gentle heat they ought to be ready in time.'

'Where are Elsa and Miss Hogg?'

'Up in Town for the day, buying stuff for that flat. Bother! I forgot the laundry-van is collecting early now, and I haven't

counted the washing. You might fill these two bowls for me. These are the bulbs—I've put the right number by each bowl, and the big one goes in the centre of each, remember.'

'The big 'un in the middle and the little 'uns all round it. Nice patriarchal arrangement. Right-oh !'

For a minute or two after the departure of Phyllis her brother sat considering his task. Then, with a grin, he rose, and extracted the speckled bulb from his writing-table.

'Whatever it is I suppose it can be forced along with the rest,' he remarked aloud. 'Might look more effective than a blooming blue hyacinth.' He planted it firmly in the middle of one of the green bowls, arranged the satellite white hyacinths around it, and dropped one of the two larger hyacinth bulbs into his writing-table drawer. When Phyllis returned both green bowls had been neatly filled and he was planting *Iris Reticulata* in one of pale yellow.

Seven weeks later Phyllis brought out the two green bowls with their sprouting contents and regarded them with a puzzled air.

'Tony,' she said, 'I don't believe *this* middle bulb is a hyacinth at all ! Look at it !'

Anthony deserted a promising attempt in *vers libre* and came and looked at it.

'It seems healthy enough, whatever it is,' he remarked. 'I should let it alone.'

'Umm . . . yes. It's too late to alter it.'

Phyllis put both bowls into the slightly warmed conservatory and went about more important business.

During the intervening weeks before Christmas the hyacinths responded nobly to treatment, and the mystery-bulb revealed itself unmistakably as indeed a dwarf lily, but a lily of a variety outside the Baxters' horticultural experience. From a basic bunch of tender green leaves, faintly freckled, rose a slender lily-stem bearing three long buds which, obligingly unfolding a few days before Christmas, revealed blooms shaped not unlike those of a small tiger-lily but coloured azure blue and flecked with gold. Brother and sister contemplated the plant in some excitement.

'It's lovely,' breathed Phyllis, 'but it might have been anything and bloomed much later, and it might not have been blue. Your silly trick might have spoilt my Christmas table.'

'Do you think Elsa could tell us what it is ?'

'I don't like to ask her,' said Phyllis slowly. 'She's quite queer about lilies. It seems that that little man she ran away from meeting when she came here was a rival lily-hunter to poor John. They were both after some weird root or other in a remote corner of China. Poor John, of course, was killed by bandits. This man, a Doctor Pink, escaped. Apparently neither of them brought the plant home, but she says a native servant who got away told her John really secured it and the other fellow boned it, but lost most of his kit and plants afterwards. Anyhow, Elsa has a lily-complex, and I can't help imagining that this lily has a regular Chinese look.'

'Quite probably, but just as probably Indian,' replied Anthony. 'She'll see it, you know, if you put it on the table for Christmas Day, when she and Miss Hogg will be dining with us.'

'I'll put it at the end where you and Miss Hogg will be sitting opposite each other. Elsa will be facing Mr. Platt, on the other side of the Christmas-tree, and they can have the bowl with only the blue hyacinths. So probably she won't notice it particularly.'

'So Platt's spending Christmas with us, is he ?' Anthony lifted an eyebrow. 'Why don't you make up your mind to marry him, Phil ?'

'Don't be silly,' said Phyllis.

Anthony did not pursue the subject, but inwardly he sighed, knowing himself to be the chief hindrance to the rather matter-of-fact romance between his sister and the estimable Stephen Platt. He bent over the lily and sniffed at it. A sudden sweet yet aromatic odour, unlike that of any other lily which he had ever encountered, assailed his nostrils. For a second he felt dizzy, then oddly exhilarated.

'I say, Phil !' He recalled the departing Phyllis. 'Just smell this !'

Phyllis sniffed the blue blossoms also. 'Idiot !' she said. 'It has no scent at all !'

'No scent ?' Anthony sniffed again. 'But I can smell it strongly !' he persisted.

'Well, I can't. And my sense of smell is quicker than yours, usually. Perhaps I have a little cold.'

'But it's a *strong* scent. Delicious !'

'I can't smell anything !' insisted Phyllis obstinately, and left him still regarding the lily with puzzled eyes.

'It's jolly queer ! There must be something wrong with my

nose,' he brooded uneasily. Then, seized with a desire for fresh air before lunch, he left the room and went into the hall to collect coat and cap. Here he encountered Miss Hogg, pallid and sitting limply on an oak bench.

' Hallo ! What's up, Eliza ? ' he asked, halting beside her.

For several years Anthony's nickname for his cousin's invaluable companion had been ' Eliza,' though precisely why he used that name in particular he hardly knew. He said ' Eliza ' and ' Elsa ' possessed a natural harmony, but Letitia Hogg, who was secretly discerning and quick to judge the nuances of life, guessed that it was because ' Eliza ' consorted better with her plain features than the more charming Letitia ; yet she enjoyed his use of it. They were friends. At this moment she gasped a little and smiled wanly.

' Heart,' she said, ' dog. Ran home.'

' I suppose that darned Peke bolted from you and you daren't lose sight of him,' remarked Anthony. ' Sit still. I'll get you a peg.'

He went to the dining-room and returned with brandy. Miss Hogg swallowed the dose half-guiltily and sighed, her sallow face flushing.

' Peky slipped his lead, and you know how valuable he is. I didn't get him till after he'd crossed the High Street with all that traffic. Then I carried him home, and when I put him down in the hall he bolted upstairs to his missus, and I had this silly attack. Don't *please* say anything about it ! I don't often have these turns.'

Anthony stood holding the empty glass and regarding her with an expression of mingled anxiety and bewilderment. He was experiencing a curious phenomenon, a sense of double-vision. He knew that he was looking at an amazingly plain woman who was about five years his senior, yet his eyes seemed to be betraying him into an impression of extraordinary beauty. A small sarcastic voice in his brain remarked to him sharply : '*A pig-like face and a figure like a sack of potatoes cannot be beautiful,*' but a stronger and more emphatic mental voice replied insistently, '*They can and they are.*' More, they were exciting, inspiring. He realised, with a violent rush of emotion, that for a long time now he had loved Letitia Hogg. Why had he not known it sooner ? Why had he ever imagined her to be ugly, a mere shy pleasant mind which occasionally conversed with his mind very harmoniously but was

encased in extreme physical unattractiveness? He would like to marry her, to ensure for himself perpetually her company, her patience, her undefinable intense allure. But could he, invalid and asthmatic, inflict himself upon any delicate woman, however plain and poor and glad to secure a husband she might be? Criminal thought! He said, unconsciously aloud, 'A pair of crocks!'

'Who? You and me?' said Miss Hogg, smiling and rising from her seat. 'Yes, we are a bit, aren't we? But we doubtless have our uses in the world or we shouldn't be here. I'm all right now. I had rheumatic fever as a girl and it left a weakness, but the last time I saw the doctor he said it's nothing serious. I only ran too much and got flurried about Peky.'

She prepared to mount the stairs and he said urgently, 'But you ought to rest, Eliza! Do lie down before lunch!'

'Perhaps I shall. But please do not mention this to your sister, will you? Or Mrs. Marlowe. I can't afford to be invalidated out of my job, you know, and the doctor honestly said it was nothing.'

'When did you last see him?'

'Oh, some little time ago!' she evaded, not mentioning that this meant several years.

'Well, you ought to see him again. I won't say anything, but . . . Eliza . . . Oh well, take those stairs slowly, won't you! Don't try and be a light gazelle and bound on Judah's hills.'

'Don't be so silly, Mr. Baxter!' replied Letitia placidly, 'And so rude! Fancy comparing *me* to a gazelle!' She climbed the wide staircase slowly, pausing at the half-landing to turn and smile down at him. He received anew a vivid impression, this time of luminous light and majesty, and again his bewildered resentful mind expostulated to him, '*A pig, even rampant, cannot be beautiful,*' and was contradicted instantly by the second inner voice. Confused, and with his own heart beating painfully, he stood holding to the newel-post of the stairs, watching Miss Hogg as she disappeared on to the floor above.

Then, snatching his hat from its peg, he went out for a walk, and returned late for lunch.

His queer double-sight persisted, and with it, during the strange days which followed, his trembling and exquisite agony of love. But this new faculty possessed a side which disconcerted and alarmed him in almost equal measure. Returning from his walk he met

his cousin Elsa Marlowe emerging from the house, and experienced for her an acute feeling of repulsion. He saw perfectly well her tall exquisite figure, her clear-cut face and delicate natural colour, yet they conveyed to him instantly an impression of squatness and discoloration, even of latent venom, which was almost toad-like, and as startling as the impact of Miss Hogg's beauty.

Moreover, these qualities inspired him almost with fear, and with jealous terror for the secret of his love. Tingling spiritual nerves cautioned him to conceal alike his attraction in the one direction, his repulsion in the other, while the long debate between common sense and conviction raged in his soul. Two 'crots!' A marriage of 'crots' upon small means, forced to wait perpetually upon each other's ailments, forbidden to produce offspring, living, perforce, a narrowed existence in each other's company; the idea was impossible, almost shocking, and yet so rich in possible bliss that he scarcely dared dwell upon it. He could at least offer dear 'Eliza' release from bondage to Elsa and from the perpetual dread of being 'invalided' out of bread-winning for herself. He knew that she was always at ease and happy in her quiet way when they were alone together. He could make her happy, and she, in some mysterious manner, could release and soothe all the taut tortured nerves of his mind and even, inexplicably, delight his eye. It had already ceased to matter to him why this thing should be. Enough that it was, and that it contained within it the assurance of eternal continuance. But until Elsa was out of the way he felt that he dared not reveal, even to his 'Eliza' this strange and blissful fact. Elsa the inexplicably ugly and dangerous would be angry, and 'Eliza' would be made to suffer. If she should refuse him Elsa would, knowing anything of the affair, indubitably sack her. If she accepted him while Elsa was in the house the earliest beginning of their happiness would be clouded with anger, ridicule, and malice. But Elsa was going away for a fortnight soon after Boxing Day, and not taking Miss Hogg.

Anthony decided to propose after her departure, and to conceal with fortitude all his emotions until then. And if Letitia-Eliza accepted him that would free Phyllis, in which case Phyllis, of course, would accept Mr. Platt. Phyllis was insisting on this small gathering of friends around their table as usual on Christmas Day. Anthony rejoiced that Elsa was to be seated at the upper half of the board, that he himself would be *vis-à-vis* to Letitia Hogg. The fact that her mouth looked oddest when engaged in eating no

longer troubled him in the least. He could perceive her oddity only in terms of beauty.

Tradition in the Baxter household had always held strong sway, and tradition decreed a miniature Christmas-tree on the Christmas dinner-table. Its branches, glittering with glass baubles and small gifts for the diners, spread themselves tactfully in the midst of an expanse of damask and silver and almost screened from casual sight, from the upper half of the long table, the second bowl of blue and white blossom.

Elsa Marlowe, animatedly engaged in conversation, did not so much as glance at the odd blue lily which rose, miniature but perfect, from amid its circle of white hyacinths, but Letitia, taking her seat, exclaimed softly, 'What a lovely plant! What is it, Mr. Baxter?'

'Nobody seems to know,' replied Anthony. 'It's a freak of some sort. From Woolworth's. I paid threepence for it.'

Miss Hogg's large gentle hand reached forth and touched one of the azure blooms lightly. 'Why, it's enchanting!' she said. 'I think it's the loveliest thing I've ever seen in coloured lilies!'

She withdrew her hand, and immediately the slender plant, shivering, bent towards her, the blooms turning their trumpet-faces in her direction. Anthony and the guests below the Christmas-tree uttered simultaneous exclamations, and conversation at the upper section stopped abruptly.

'What's the matter?' asked the anxious voice of Phyllis.

'It's this plant!' answered Anthony excitedly. 'It's magnetic or a sensitive plant or something. Anyhow, look what it's doing! It's bowing to Eliza because she touched it!'

There was a scraping back of chairs. Everyone crowded to the lower end of the table in an odd silence.

'Let's all touch it, gently,' suggested someone, 'and see if it does that for all of us.'

Six hands reached out simultaneously, but were manœuvred into separate turns by the excited Anthony. Only 'Eliza' dropped her hands in her lap and stared wonderingly at the plant and Elsa stood silent well away from it. But the lily without a name continued its queer homage to Miss Hogg and totally ignored every other touch. Phyllis seized her cousin and pushed her forward.

'You *must* touch it too, Elsa!' she commanded. 'Everyone must do so, or we shan't know if it's only something about Miss Hogg that magnetises it.'

'No! I don't want to!' Elsa's voice sounded hoarse and odd. A sudden fierce imp of perversity possessed Anthony and he caught her hand before she realised his intention and thrust the white jewelled fingers against the nearest blue blossom. The whole plant, shivering and swaying, seemed to writhe from her touch and to bend more desperately towards the silent, rather scared, Letitia. Elsa jerked herself back from the contact, her features twitching.

'Don't!' she said huskily, 'don't . . . it's the . . . it's uncanny!'

Babel broke loose, and subsided again as Anthony raised his voice energetically.

'Eliza,' he called, 'you are certainly magnetic, but let's see how much so. Stand clear, all of you! Now, Elsa and Eliza, you sit one on each side of the plant and both touch it and see which of you most affects it.'

'No!' cried Elsa. 'No!'

He glanced at her and quickly averted his glance.

'All right,' he said. 'Well, Eliza, will you then just get up slowly, and move back from the table, and let's see what happens?'

Letitia rose obediently and retreated backwards across the wide room, but not until she had almost reached the wall did the lily slowly straighten itself and drop its lifted blooms into their former pendency.

'Eliza,' said Anthony solemnly, 'you *are* magnetic!'

Miss Hogg did not look it, to the other incredulous eyes now turned towards her. She merely appeared as excessively plain, clumsy and a little frightened. But her small bright eyes encountered Anthony's and read therein a strange message. She flushed, lifting a hand to her face, and it seemed to him that the slight action was the very poetry of motion.

Phyllis began to laugh nervously.

'Tony,' she said, 'are you playing one of your senseless practical jokes on us?'

'Nothing of the sort!' He spoke almost angrily. 'I don't understand this . . . or other things about this lily at all. Elsa, I believe you could explain something!'

'Indeed I can't! The thing upsets me. I am going upstairs.' Mrs. Marlowe turned away and retreated rapidly to the door with a swift swirl of oyster-coloured silk raiment. Nothing could have been more graceful than her movement, and yet the staring Anthony

was reminded forcibly of a toad which he had once seen scrambling clumsily from beneath the oncoming wheel of a country cart. Almost the beast had been crushed before it escaped.

Letitia returned to the table and once more timidly touched the blue petals. But this time the plant remained immobile.

Mr. Platt, business like and systematic, revolved the green bowl and arranged a series of individual experiments, but the lily, aloof as are all lilies however small, responded to none. Settling down to their hindered festive meal the company debated the recent phenomenon eagerly and advanced many theories. Only Miss Hogg said little and appeared to have no theory to advance. Before the evening was over most of the party had begun to doubt the evidence of their own eyes, and general opinion inclined to a belief that 'it must have been caused by a draught or something.' Phyllis having recounted the episode of the elusive scent, everyone, including Anthony, sniffed the blossoms, but nobody, not even Anthony, could detect any odour. He thought, silently and with a mental quiver of delight, '*It has yielded me once its scent, and to Eliza, once, its homage. There must be a meaning in this!*' But, self-protectively, he kept the thought secret. Mr. Platt suggested consulting the botanical authorities at Kew, and Anthony agreed to think about it. But Elsa, obstinately, would not return to the dinner-table or rejoin the party. Miss Hogg, after having gone to investigate, returned with the report that Mrs. Marlowe felt ill and had gone to bed, and her maid was in attendance. Phyllis explained that her cousin's husband had been killed by savage Chinese while exploring after some kind of new lily, and that, in consequence, Elsa suffered from a lily-complex and was naturally much upset by this mysterious flower. Mr. Platt's sister opined that the Marlowes must have been a particularly devoted couple, and Phyllis agreed, though a shade doubtfully, that they were. The talk veered to travel and deviated to somebody's book about orchid-hunting. Afterwards came dancing to a gramophone in the next room, when Anthony experienced great relief at the absence of Elsa, with whom he would have been obliged to dance. Miss Hogg, on the score of a tendency to giddiness, did not dance, and presently slipped away.

'Waiting on Elsa,' he thought grimly. 'Well, she shan't do that much longer, if I can help it! And whenever I'm sick I'm damned if she shall wait on me. I'll do what Phil won't let me do, and get in an ex-soldier or somebody who can nurse me when required.'

Presently he went back to the dining-room and on an impulse collected the lily-bowl and carried the plant not to the greenhouse but into his own den. Emerging, he locked the door behind him and confided his act of confiscation to Phyllis.

'I don't want anything to happen to it until I've shown it to an authority,' he informed her. 'Don't tell Elsa where it is.'

'All right. But *she* wouldn't interfere with it.'

'I'm not so sure.'

'What makes you think that?'

'Can't say, but I do. Elsa's queer!'

And when, next day before she departed for her visit, he discovered his cousin casually hunting for something first in the dining-room and then in the greenhouse he removed the plant into yet safer quarters, and locked it into the bulb-cupboard. Only when, on the following afternoon, she departed with Peky the valuable in a taxi, did he bring out the lily, and set it once more on his writing-table.

'You must come to Kew with me, Eliza,' he told Letitia, 'in a day or two. We must take this up together.'

'And me,' said Phyllis.

'Oh yes. Of course, you were with me when I bought it,' recollecting Anthony, who had half-thought of proposing in a hot-house at Kew.

'I should think I was,' said Phyllis.

But the next day was given over to rain and sleet and again the day after that. Nobody felt much inclined to travel to Kew and the lily showed no sign of going out of bloom.

Anthony decided after all to propose at home, in the privacy of his own den. When Phyllis, on the third day, went out to tea, he ordered his own afternoon tea to be served by his study fire and requested Letitia to share the meal. And there, beside the benediction of the blue lily, he was about to inform the unsuspecting 'Eliza' of his profound and eternal devotion to herself when someone rang the front-door bell, and the daily maid came to inform him that a gentleman had called, and, having asked first to see Mrs. Marlowe, and being informed of her absence, had then asked for Mr. Baxter and been taken to the drawing-room. His card proclaimed his name: Dr. E. Pink.

Miss Hogg put down her cup of tea and looked at Anthony with some anxiety.

'That's the man Mrs. Marlowe avoided in Town,' she said.

'Yes,' replied Anthony. 'The man who was reported to have pinched Marlowe's collection of plants when he was killed.'

'Can't you get rid of him? What can he want? Do you think I ought to see him for her? I . . . I don't feel much like it!'

'Of course not! The bloke's asked for me. I'll deal with him. Perhaps he's heard something about this plant of ours, since he's a botanist. I believe it's something rare. Don't you think Elsa recognised it as something she had heard about, a species she knew of?'

'I did rather get that impression,' said Letitia reluctantly, 'but she never said anything definite.'

'D'you think she's a bit queer in the head?' asked Anthony, thoughtfully.

Miss Hogg considered this. 'No,' she decided, 'I don't quite think that. But she's terribly nervous. I think she had very queer experiences when travelling abroad, and I wish she was not so mixed up with so many odd "intellectuals," and so interested in uncanny things.' Miss Hogg paused. 'I don't want to discuss her disparagingly,' she continued, 'but I wish you could counteract the influence some people seem to have over her. I'm sure it's bad, unwholesome, somehow debased.'

'I'll go and rout the Pink'un to begin with,' said Anthony cheerfully, and went to the drawing-room.

Dr. Pink had been weather-beaten and baked and frozen alternately in so many quarters of the world that Anthony discovered him to be both brown and yellow, but certainly not unprepossessing; a shrivelled little man, with close-set inscrutable but kindly eyes, and a somewhat charming voice. 'Quite a little old-fashioned gentleman!' thought Anthony, returning his visitor's bow.

Aloud he said: 'I believe you wished to see my cousin, Mrs. Marlowe, Dr. Pink, but she is away. Can I take any message for her?'

'I should be much obliged,' said Dr. Pink punctilioiusly. He scrutinised Anthony's visage narrowly. 'Would you kindly tell her, should you be writing to her, that I have not yet been able to trace the lost bulb, in spite of the recent rumour of its possible whereabouts, and so deeply regret that I cannot yet recover it for her, but I hope very shortly to do so.'

'I beg your pardon, did you say the lost bulb?'

'I did.—To be more exact, the lost lily bulb.'

'Would you mind explaining *what* lily? My cousin has never mentioned to me that she has lost one. In fact . . . well, I gathered that she dislikes lilies, on account of matters connected with her late husband's death.'

'I am not surprised,' stated Dr. Pink. 'I was with him at the time. I managed to save certain items of his unique collection, intending to bring them to Europe.' He shrugged his shoulders. 'Fate decreed otherwise,' he said. 'They were stolen from me while I lay ill of fever. Among them was the root which Marlowe risked his life to acquire; a unique and extraordinary thing.'

'And Mrs. Marlowe really wanted you to recover it for her? Have you been trying to do so for six years, Dr. Pink?'

'I had reason to believe that it reached Europe,' said the botanist. 'Mrs. Marlowe offered me a reward—a very great reward—if I could recover it for her.'

'What's it like? What is it called?'

'Scientifically it is still unnamed. Marlowe was the only European who has yet seen it in bloom—and no sooner had he acquired it in bulb than he was murdered. It is the sacred flower of an obscure cult, whose members live entirely in the mountains of Yun-nan, where they cultivate it in small quantities and guard it jealously from exportation. Its native name signifies "*The Discoverer of Beauty, the Detector of Shame.*"'

'The what?'

Dr. Pink repeated the title, supplementing it with a few brief Chinese syllables. 'It is believed by the disciples of the cult,' he explained smilingly, 'that if certain rites are practised by the priesthood at the lifting of the first bulb of the year's crop for transplanting, then that plant is endowed with some magnetic spiritual quality akin to the diviner's rod—it will turn irresistibly, when in bloom, towards the most beautiful woman in a company of women, should she touch it, and recoil from the least pure. This, however, according to its devotees, it will only do once—except for a further uncertain statement that it will repeat its odd testimony once again should it be near either party in the hour of her death.' He shrugged thin shoulders. 'An odd notion, purely legendary, of course, or founded on some priestly trickery. Mrs. Marlowe, who as you doubtless know, is greatly interested in odd religious practices, was extremely anxious that I should recover the sanctified bulb procured at so much risk by her late husband, so that its properties might actually be tested.'

'Are you *sure* she wanted the thing ?'

'She was extremely anxious that no one else should make the experiment but herself—and myself—in a selected company of ladies.'

Anthony was silent. Very forcibly it occurred to him that Elsa had desired nothing so much as to obtain and destroy a thing she had cause to fear. After a moment he asked : ' May I be impertinent enough to enquire, Dr. Pink, what price she was prepared to offer for it ? '

'She did me the honour,' said Dr. Pink gravely, 'of promising to marry me.'

'Oh !'

Yet Elsa had been avoiding this man. Obviously she had repented of her bargain, and hoped that the lily had been lost beyond recall.

'You say that the bulb is rumoured to be in Europe,' he said, trying to speak casually. 'Have you any notion of whereabouts that signifies ?'

'I last traced it from the hands of its first thief—Marlowe's Chinese valet (who died suddenly in Limehouse and whose effects, including the bulb, which no one knew was unique, were divided and scattered) to those of a small seedsmen, who placed the thing among his other stock and sold it with several other bulbs to an old gentleman living out of London in this direction. But it seems that this old gentleman dropped the thing out of a bursting paper bag during further shopping in this town. I have interviewed him and explained that the bulb was a rare one reserved for experimental purposes and sold to him originally by mistake, and that I am prepared to pay a reward of several guineas for its recovery. Unfortunately he has not the remotest idea where he dropped it—he was out shopping accompanied by a small and restless grandson at the time. Quite probably the bulb fell into some gutter, and has been trampled to death. However, we shall do our best to make sure. You will, of course, understand, Mr. Baxter, that I have told you all this in strict confidence, as a close relation of Mrs. Marlowe's, who can, I am sure, be trusted.'

'I quite understand.' Anthony rose from the seat which he had taken opposite his visitor. 'Do you mind waiting a moment in here, Dr. Pink ?' he asked. 'Mrs. Marlowe's secretary is in the next room, and I believe may be able to assist you.'

He left the room rapidly, moving with all the vigour of excite-

ment and delight. This fantastic wonderful thing was true! His quickened perception and the sacred lily had not lied. But how could they ever tell this Dr. Pink that the lily had recoiled from Elsa? He must bring 'Eliza' and the lily to the Doctor, at any rate.

He opened his study door, and then, stricken into sobriety, closed it behind him and stood, staring, for a moment, before, with an inarticulate cry, he ran forward.

The blue lily stood where he had left it. Beside it Letitia Hogg lay quietly in the shabby easy chair, her head fallen sideways, her ungainly figure slumped ungracefully, her left arm trailing over the arm of the chair.

And the lily stood upright, its three blue bells, as though swept upwards by a passing caress, pointing Heavenward.

IN SUMMER.

OLD men may love to think about Earth's end
And sing that great catastrophe of life.
Warmth gone to grim, eternal frosts that rend
The hills ; and frozen seas in solid strife.

But let them shudder with the wheels run down.
For me the roses topple to the sun,
And every hill goes greenly to its crown
And there is warmth enough for everyone.

Here I can lie deep in the clover flowers,
Loving this hour and capable of this ;
Larks in their heaven and bees in lower bowers
Buzzing the pleasures of my honeyed bliss.

Daily I see the sun's great coming fill
The fields with life, and cannot think things ill.

JOHN GIBBINS.

THE BATTLE OF OMDURMAN.
A CONTEMPORARY ACCOUNT CONTRIBUTED
BY ETHEL SMYTH

THE other day, turning over some old papers, I came upon a letter from my brother, then a lieutenant in the 21st Lancers, which gave what seemed to me such a vivid, though simple, account of the celebrated charge that I asked his permission to publish it. Nothing would be easier than to change a word here, elaborate a sentence there—in fact, to turn it into ‘literature.’ But I think there is a subtle virtue in an unvarnished first-hand tale that is apt to evaporate in the touching-up process, so, even if I had not been requested to do so, I should have let the letter stand as it is.

The 21st Lancers formed part of the army raised in 1898 by Sir Herbert Kitchener for the reconquest of the Soudan, and a few extracts from earlier letters scribbled by my brother on the march from Cairo to Omdurman may also be of interest, as concerning the early career of one destined to play a prominent part in English political history.

I.

Wadi Halfa.

. . . We entrained at the railway siding at Abbassiyeh, and I find I have got an addition to my troop, Winston Churchill of the 4th Hussars. He's Lord Randolph's son and has been fighting in Cuba ; he also took part in the Chitral campaign, about which he wrote a book ; and perhaps for that reason Kitchener began by refusing to have him ! He arrived however the night before we started and taught us a new game called *Bridge*, which comes from Constantinople and is like whist but more of a gamble. At present, as I said, he is attached to my troop, but when we arrive at the place of concentration and form a fourth squadron, he'll be given a troop in that.

He's only 23 and frightfully keen. He started by telling me he was more interested in men than horses, so I asked him to look after their rations, etc., and said I would do the horses. He asked to see the men, spoke to them (very well too) and had a great success ; in fact they liked him. He also said it surprised him that I, at 30 years of age, was content to be only a troop

leader of cavalry! That amused me! Anyhow I do know how to do it!

II.

. . . Winston Churchill rides with me sometimes on the march and is such good company; keeps me awake, which is a great thing; for starting so early and going to bed so late, we are apt to sleep in the saddle, especially (as you have probably read in the papers) as we all have to wear blue gauze veils to keep off sun, dust, and mosquitoes, so that smoking is a nuisance. . . . We have now joined up with the other forces. My squadron leader, Harry Finn, was a trooper in the 9th Lancers in the Afghan War, and got a commission for taking them out of action near Kabul when all his officers were *hors de combat*. At one of our halts he took me to see an old friend of his, Hector Macdonald, who commands the Soudanese Brigade. He was pleasant to meet but grimmer and gruffer than Harry Finn. . . .

III.

. . . The infantry came all the way by boat as far as the point of concentration, but have been marching for the last two or three days. We saw the Seaforth going into bivouac. I was so sorry for them; many have very badly blistered knees, as you can imagine, given clouds of sand, blazing sun, and the sweating. In fact one would think marching in kilts must be a penance, but nothing would induce them to fight in anything else. . . .

IV.

Omdurman, 4/9/98.

. . . Herewith a full account of my experiences during the last few days. You will have read the whole affair by now in the papers, so I will confine myself to what I saw and did.

I am rather handicapped, as, owing to my servant having been wounded (in five places), my kit has been in charge of chance servants, who kindly *would* insist on helping, and one of my most important bags containing my diary and hold-all has been lost, which is more than annoying.

I will write in diary form as that makes it easier to quote one's facts.

29th Aug.—Final concentration of whole force. Arrived in

bivouac after 22 miles march about 6.30. Pouring all night. Horses, men, and saddlery wet through.

30th Aug.—*Reveille* 3 a.m. Still raining. Saddled in the dark. Started at 5 a.m. I went out with my troop as right advance patrol. Saw no enemy, though two prisoners were captured on my left. Halted at 1 p.m. Was sent on two miles with troop as advance picket. Remained out till 6 p.m. The bush in front of my picket was full of Dervish horsemen. I counted about a hundred. They did not come nearer than from 12 to 15 hundred yards of me. Eventually about 5.30 they lit a series of bonfires and retired. It was a sign that the day's work was over. Returned to the Zareba with rest of regiment. Had peaceful night's rest.

31st Aug.—My squadron in Reserve; saw nothing but had long tiring day, 11 hours in the saddle. Montmorency and Pirie went forward alone to reconnoitre the Camp and Kerreri. They were nearly cut off by some horsemen but got away all right. It was a foolhardy thing to allow, but it was very plucky.

1st Sep.—Sent out an Officer's Patrol at 5 a.m. to see if same Camp was occupied. Found that it was not, so sent back word to that effect, after which I was recalled, and we advanced in force to range of hills further off. This range was the scene of everything. I shall always refer to it as *the range*.¹

From there we had a grand panoramic view of Omdurman and the Mahdi's Tomb. In front was their first army, 30,000 strong, drawn up in battle array just like they form on Laffan's Plane for a *feu de joie*. We made two demonstrations to try to make them advance, but they did not. We held this range till two when we returned to the Zareba. During the night there was some desultory firing, but, as you will have seen no damage done. Having been sixteen hours in the saddle so to speak, I slept soundly through it all. More rain.

2nd Sep.—My squadron first out of Zareba at 5.30 a.m. I was sent out again to the Range as Officer's Patrol. Saw the whole first Dervish army in two long lines with about 10,000 troops in reserve on the right. Sent in my information. First line about 1,200 yards from me. Recalled temporarily about seven, but sent out again to watch any change of front. Found their centre halted about 600 yards from me. My Patrol concealed behind rocks. I advanced with one man to hold my horse, and find the whole

¹ The name of this ridge was the Kerreri Ridge.

of the right swinging round. I send in to that effect. While writing a Correspondent rides up and remains mounted. Riflemen in centre see this and fire two volleys. Bullets whistling and splashing on the rocks very close. The Colonel hearing this, sends for me to retire at once. Both he and Pirie much excited, annoyed, and very fussy, saying I was unnecessarily exposing myself. It was the Correspondent's fault, and after all it was only one private and myself; no great loss if we had been hit. However, we got away without being so. My squadron leader leaves for orders. I take charge of Squadron and retire them to re-join regiment behind the Zareba.

Half-way there (about a mile), guns on both sides opened fire. Enemy have occupied the Range with their right. The whole herd advancing howling. Have to trot my Squadron past not to mask fire front. The whole regiment halt in rear of Zareba. Artillery duel goes on. Have good view of it all. Frightful slaughter of enemy, but not much damage to Zareba. Colonel Rhodes wounded inside it and a few privates of Infantry. Maxim and Infantry fires very steady and deadly. Enemy gets between 300 and 400 yards of position. Break up and fly. We are ordered to high ground right of the range to wait orders and pursue. Good view of battlefield. Horrible sights of dead and dying. Wounded horses and men trying to get away. Men on all fours creeping, finally giving up, and lying down to die. Horses, lame and galloping about aimlessly. Regular inferno. Retreating enemy cross the range, and, no longer under fire, begin to try and reform. We are ordered to stop them and clear plain on Omdurman side of any formed or forming body.

We mount and go down plain at sharp trot in line of squadron columns. See formed body of about two hundred, 600 yards to our left. Front troops left wheel. Immediately met by volley fairly accurately aimed. My right-hand man drops, his horse under him. Bullets seem to be whistling and splashing all round. 'Right Wheel into line, Charge!' We are right Squadron and get orders, 'Right Shoulders.' Manoeuvre well carried out and I am left troop leader. Looking round see Nullah (ditch) 8 feet wide, 4 feet deep, in front. Every side a compact mass of white robed men apparently countless, still firing and waving swords. Find myself at Nullah. Man bolts out leaving two donkeys in my way. I catch hold of my horse hard by the head, knowing that to fall would be fatal. He blunders against donkey, recovers,

and scrambles out. Am met by swordsman on foot. Cuts at my right front. I guard it with sword. Next man with fat face all in white, having fired and missed me throws up both hands. I cut him across the face. He drops. Large bearded man in blue with two-edged-sword and both hands cuts at me. Think this time I must be done for, but pace tells and my guard carries it off. Duck my head to spear thrown, which just misses me. Another cuts at my horse; I miss guard, but luckily cut is too far away and only cuts through my breast-plate and gives my horse a small flesh wound on neck and shoulder.

Then I remember no more till I find myself outside with four or five of my troop. See Major Wyndham running. Gallop to help him. I am just too late, Kenna seized him and takes him out, not me.¹ Rally my troop as well as I can. Horrible sights. Everyone seems to be bleeding including my own horse. I don't know even if he is badly hurt or not. It seems to be blood, blood, blood everywhere. Horses and men smothered with either own or somebody else's. Wounded men being carried off by others as one sees in pictures. Horses dropping down and running away. See Nesham led away with left hand hanging down. Words are passed on: 'Poor Grenfell killed, 2,000 men, Brinton shot, poor little Smyth killed, etc.' (the Colonel, Montmorency, and Dauncey at first mistook Grenfell for me, he was so horribly mutilated). We re-form, take up their position, and use dismounted fire. Men fire steadily, the break-up is complete. The one formed band is dispersed. Our charge has been successful. We are left in possession of the ground and the whole plain is ours.

Some say we did right, others wrong, but the fact remains that we achieved our object and did what we were told to do. Three hundred Cavalry had dispersed 2,000 Riflemen who stood their ground. They may say that the charge was *pour la gloire*, but it was not only a brave feat, but also a successful one. The casualties were big for these times: 1 officer killed, 4 wounded; 20 N.C.O.s. and men killed, and 40-50 wounded. More than 20 per cent. not counting the horses. In my troop only 18 men, lost 1 killed, 3 wounded and 4 horses.

After we saw the complete success of work we re-visited the scene of the charge. I was told off to get six men of my troop and collect our dead. The less said about that the better. It was ghastly. The tears streamed down my cheeks and I was

¹ Captain Paul Kenna was awarded the V.C. for this action.

physically sick. It was terrible. At this present moment I don't want the morning repeated. It cost too dear. I have always wanted to be in a charge and have got my desire and am satisfied. We then proceeded to collect and disarm stragglers, an easy object as none of them showed fight. This lasted two hours, while the Infantry battle with the second army was going on on our right. They had gone straight for the Camel Corps, Egyptian Cavalry and Horse Batteries. They were practically cut off and had to gallop. The ground was heavy and three guns had to be left, but only temporarily, as when the Soudanese came up the second army was driven back again.

After this the Colonel was ordered to see if Omdurman was occupied. He sent me on with four men. I got into the camp, but found that completely deserted, the buildings were however occupied, and as I could get no cover we had to retire about 1,000 yards as they were firing rather straight at us. However, I discovered all that was wanted, and think I am entitled to say I was first into Omdurman as the Camp was part of it.

We then went back (4 p.m.) to feed and water our horses. They had had nothing since 4 a.m. and the *khor* we watered at was an overflow from the Nile and stagnant with dead donkeys. I knew we shouldn't drink, and as punishment have got a bad go of dysentery; but we were too awfully thirsty to resist temptation.

We were out till dusk, as outposts, watching one of the gates of the city. Men and horses were hungry as well as thirsty, for we had finished our emergency rations, so leaving a sergeant in charge I went to see if I could get anything. Walking round I saw a table with lights on it, and guessed it was some Staff or other. As I got near I recognised Wingate, on Kitchener's staff, and was going to ask for help; but he got up and signalled me away saying, 'The Sirdar is writing his despatch.' So we lay down on the rocks and slept heavily, getting no food till early next day when we were sent south of the city to collect stragglers, arms, and men returning to give themselves up. We were out till 6 p.m. Dull and tiring work.

. . . This morning there is a Memorial Service to Gordon at Khartoum. Numbers were limited, but I managed to squeeze myself in and got up at four to go, but could not all the same, as I was ill and in pain; but I got some opium and other medicine and am feeling all right now. I am very well really, this is only an incident. I shall have nothing more of interest to write about.

I wish I had seen the planting of the British Flag at Khartoum. It is going on now, but I want to be fit for the march in state through Omdurman.

. . . I may as well give you the list of our horse casualties, as that will shew you more than the men what we went through ; 8 killed outright in action, 14 destroyed immediately afterwards, 44 gun-shot wounds, and 53 spear and sword wounds now in sick lines. Total : Men and Officers killed and wounded, 70 ; Horses, 119,—and all that out of 300. It was an experience and what struck me most was that you always hear that there are cases in every action of some men wanting dash and courage, whereas *I cannot quote one*. I would if I could as I value true statistics. As far as Cavalry goes it is the biggest thing since Balaclava, and I am very proud of belonging to the 21st Lancers. Wise or unwise it was a brave deed nobly done and, as Colonel Wauchope said, he was so proud and pleased it had happened as it proved that Cavalry still existed and that we had not come here to play at Mounted Infantry. I must go now, I have to give in my return. In spite of losses in the Field I can march out 28 horses and 27 men fit out of the 38 I started with from Cairo.

. . . This place is like the Infernal Regions. I never saw anything so disgusting. Crowds of horses and donkeys all dead any time within the last two weeks. The Mahdi's Tomb has been badly knocked about by the gun-boat shells. I believe the Soudanese raided and slaughtered the night after the battle to a great extent. I am very glad. If I had my way every man we captured on the battlefield should have been shot at once then and there, cold blood or not. If you had seen the condition of our dead you would have said the same. We appear to be the only lot who had any really hard fighting or suffered to any great extent.

[*The writer of the above, now Brigadier-General R. N. Smyth, C.B.E., D.S.O., J.P., subsequently commanded the 21st Lancers. He is at present Chairman of the British Legion in his part of the world, Secretary to the Hertfordshire Hunt, and follows hounds with the zeal and energy of an ex-cavalry soldier.]*

A FORTNIGHT IN N.W. LURISTAN.

BY FREYA STARK.

I.

IN the wastes of civilisation, oases are getting ever rarer, but Luristan is yet one of them. Its streams are dotted blue lines on the map and the position of its hills a matter of taste. It is still a country for the explorer.

He finds out what he cannot do
And then he goes and does it.

I did not do it, for I penetrated only a very little way. But I spent a fortnight in that part of the country where one is less frequently murdered, and I saw the Lurs still in their own medieval garb—the white tight-waisted coat with sleeves hanging in points from the elbow and white felt caps over the curls that hide their ears. As the aim of the Persian government is to have them all dressed '*à la Ferangi*' in a year's time, with peaked képis and the Shah's portrait stamped on the lining, it is worth while perhaps to give a picture of them as far as possible before too much tidiness spoils them.

Behold then Hajji and me, climbing on very scraggy ponies up to the Varazan Pass. Behind us is the town of Nihavend and the nearer mound of Gian where French archæologists give kind hospitality and press Bovril and ham into one's saddle-bags—the latter not to be touched, alas! because of Religion, which is always interfering with the pleasant conduct of life. Hajji looks gloomy. Friends have told him he is going to be killed. Lessening under our feet, the grassy slopes of Kuh Garu shut in Luristan as with a wall. This climbing into a country which is not considered safe is exhilarating, though no sense of peril is possible in so bright sunlight, such radiant solitude, such breadth of mountain ranges under the pale October sky. As a matter of fact, it is only the *other* three passes over Kuh Garu which are presumed to be held by robbers at this moment: our Varazan has been in the hands of government for the last six weeks. It



is as well to know this beforehand ; otherwise one might take the garrison for bandits instead of policemen. They come tumbling out of a round stone tower, their guns neat and clean among the débris of the rest of their attire. They take a toll of 8 krans (1s. 5d.) for every pack animal across the pass. When the robbers held it, they took only sevenpence more, and might have gone on making a regular income for a long time if they had not lost their tempers one day with two merchants who thought to bargain fivepence off the tariff and whose death caused a stoppage in the charcoal trade which comes out of Luristan by Kuh Garu ; whereupon government dislodged the bandits, handed over ten guns to some Lurs of Khava who are on the side of law and order for the time being, and left the pass and its revenue in their hands.

These volunteers were friendly people, delighted with a little conversation and chivalrous enough to forgo their 8 krans in honour of their first Ferangi from the plain.

They brought little glasses of tea into the sunshine, spread a felt rug, and began to talk about the present security of Persia with the enthusiasm which is general there among the poorer sort. One of them had a wounded leg which I doctored with brandy, while the chief of the post, pushing his long hair out of his eyes and leaning on his gun, slowly read the address on my letter of introduction to the Governor at Alishtar. This letter was an 'open Sesame' : its quite insignificant contents were luckily sealed up, but the name on the envelope had already served to get me through the entanglements of the Nihavend police : its mere production gave the impression that I travelled with the authority of governments behind me ; and when I handed it to anyone, I tried to cultivate a manner to correspond. I had another letter to the brother of the Keeper of the Varazan, which produced more friendliness and promise of a night's lodging in the plain of Khava below. The Ten sat in a row looking at me : so did two menials who, they explained, came to do the sweeping, though there was nothing to show for such domestic efforts among the rocks. As the caravans of tribesmen climbed up to the pass, one of our group would stroll across to waylay them and exact the toll : the small black oxen, scarce visible between enormous sacks of goatwool filled with charcoal or grain, strayed on, surefooted, while the men stood counting out the money and brought news of the jungle or the town according as they came from south or north. Their road lay like a ribbon far below us

across the plain of Khava whose southern edge, fringed with small pointed hills and further wave-like ridges, vanished into a gentle distance. Very few Europeans travel in this country. Sir A. T. Wilson has been there, and perhaps half a dozen more : and in 1836 Sir Henry Rawlinson marched his Persian regiment across it, locating in his mind as he went the vanished nations whose horses grazed over these open downs.

We parted from the garrison and proceeded with difficulty owing to the jagged steepness of the southern slope, which is scarce practicable for horses. The way from the pass runs down a stony cleft. The whole range is like a wave whose gentle slope we had been climbing from the Nihavend plain, and we now had the sheer side to negotiate : and as we slipped and stumbled among the sliding surfaces of the limestone, Hajji forgot that he had come to me pretending to know every inch of the road, and complained in a pathetic voice that this was no place for anyone but thieves.

It seemed right that the entrance to the forbidden country should not be too easy. Our expectation had been rising ever since Nihavend which, lying so close, yet speaks of Luristan as a region unknown, governed by laws and standards in which the peaceful townsmen have no part. Every day, from far in the southern jungles, the caravans of black oxen bring their loads of corn or charcoal across the mountain wall. The tribesmen, with uncombed hair and eyes frankly hostile, squat in groups of their own under the rampart of the old fortress and have no social dealings with the citizens. The guard on the Varazan, with its ragged clothes and shining gun-barrels, emphasised the point as it were : when we came to them we reached the gate of a new country. No one travels here unless he has the freedom of the tribes or some other protection : there were no peasants or merchants among the climbers to the pass : only white-coated Lurs fixing us with suspicious fearless eyes. They gave no greeting, but were ready enough, I found, to answer if one spoke to them.

And now, at a bend in our narrow gorge, the plain of Khava opened out below us, washing like a yellow wave to the rocks of Kuh Garu ; dotted in an Arcadian way with black flocks and tents, and intersected from east to west by a grass-banked stream. Away on its southern side it was all pastoral solitude running to small hills ; but in its centre were harvested fields of corn,

tribesmen tilling, villages where the mountain sank into the plain, and mounds of buried cities here and there.

These must once have been populous places, with a beaten track winding over one of the easier passes from Nihavend or Harsin through the villages of Khava to Alishtar—mentioned in the fourteenth century as an important city—and so to Khurramabad and the eastern plains. Somewhere in this district the rebel Gautama is thought to have been vanquished by Darius : here possibly were the Nisaian pasture lands visited by Alexander on his way up into Persia, but famous for their horses under the Achæmenians long before him. One finds bronzes, flints, and earthenware in the lonely valleys. Wave after wave of people unnamed and unnumbered lose themselves here in unrecorded dimnesses of time.

This, however, was not what occupied our thoughts, but rather the problem of how to find our particular Lurs in a plain about eight miles by twelve in which no one knew the way. A weedy tall man with bushy eyebrows had come with us from Nihavend as a guide. He also, I soon discovered, had never been up before—and he was furthermore a wreck from opium, which takes people's legs more completely than beer : he would sit down at intervals looking like a traveller in the early stages of a Channel crossing, and refuse to take any interest in our hopes for lunch among friends.

We reached the area of cultivation, and, riding gently through ploughed fields and melon patches, finally came upon people who directed us to our Keram Ali Lurs at the mound of Qal'a Kafrash in the west, where a few mud houses and a row or two of black tents combine to make a village. The mound, about eighty feet high by eighty broad, rises with that artificial regularity of shape which shows the buried work of man all over Persia and Mesopotamia ; it gives the feeling of a cemetery incredibly old to many a landscape there. The Lurs of Kafrash, however, were not oppressed by their antique surroundings : they were as cheerful a lot of villains as you could wish to meet, and delighted with us for being, as they said, brave enough to come among them. In the absence of the Khan, his wife ruled the house. She was a lovely woman with a very narrow long face and arched eyebrows—a beauty fierce and strange, but with the most roguish smile imaginable. Her dark hair, with gleams of henna in it, was curled in two long ringlets on each shoulder and crowned with an immense *sarband* or turban of coloured silks aslant over one eye, which

gave an absurd mixture of rakishness and dignity to her appearance. She wore an old red velvet coat full at the waist, with tinsel edges, over a loose cotton gown of yellow printed flowers : and she walked like a queen. She ruled her household also like a queen, with none of the submissiveness of Persian women in general. She seated me beside her, tried my hat and examined as much of my clothing as she could get at, embraced me, told me that I was her sister, and allowed me to hold the baby in my arms. Cousins, uncles, brothers, and brothers-in-law meanwhile sat in a half-circle on the opposite side of the hearth, waiting for these female amenities to end. They had furtive long faces, with eyes rather near together, but strong, big-boned and healthy. They thought nothing of the people of the plain. 'We smoke no opium here,' said they, glancing at my guide, who was just lifting a piece of lighted charcoal to his second pipe. Hajji too, who cannot conceal that he thinks a Persian town the only synonym for civilisation, was being left in the cold as an alien. But I am a hill woman myself, and I travelled in Luristan for pleasure : they accepted me kindly.

When evening came, and the last mouthfuls of rice had been scooped off the round tray before us, they brought an enormous camp bed for me to sleep in, looted from the Russians. My host and his beautiful wife arranged themselves under a quilt in a corner of the room ; and four brothers or cousins disposed themselves at my feet. As a last afterthought, they picked my shoes off the floor and put them under my mattress, for I had not yet learnt that one sleeps on all one possesses in Luristan.

Next morning might have been an autumn day in Scotland. A faint mist trailed in and out of the woollen roofs of the tents and along the ground, among sparse willow-trees that followed the course of a little stream. While the women lighted the fire indoors, the men stood to get warm against a sheltered wall in the early sun. Mahmud, a shifty-eyed brother of our host, offered to take me over the pass to Alishtar. 'Your man from Nihavend will not be necessary,' said he. 'He can go home.'

Now I had been thinking this myself, but did not like the idea so well when presented by someone who might be planning unpleasantness. It meant risking a lonely pass in unprepossessing company with one's escort diminished by half, and Hajji's frightened looks, and the assembled tribesmen coldly taking note of them, made matters worse. I thought, however, that a

man who smokes much opium is very little use in a crisis : and if the Lurs meant mischief they had every facility for carrying it out whatever our arrangements. I said I should be delighted, and tactfully added that I would remember the tribe's kindness to the Governor in Alishtar. Hajji tried some half-strangled remonstrance, cowed by the hostile eyes upon him. As for the guide from Nihavend, he burst into tears. 'A man like that would bring bad luck to anyone,' our new guide said as we watched him lope away across the fields.

We followed our track of the day before, along the Badavar River, by the village of Noah, through cultivated land : then turned south, where there are no villages, but rolling downs for miles, covered with thorny bushes of gum tragacanth which the Lurs collect and sell in the towns : every plant has a small pit dug round it, the stem is incised thrice a year at an interval of a week or so, and the gum oozes out ready to be sold. These pits make the most irritating country to ride over, as bad as a rabbity bit of Dartmoor.

As we were going along in pleasant loneliness, talking of this and that, with only here and there a shepherd and his flocks to break the long lines of curving empty land, I began to notice that we were not keeping to our intended direction of the Gatchkah Pass, where a police post guards the track to Alishtar.

'Why are we going so far south ?' I asked.

'The Gatchkah is not safe to-day,' said Mahmud with one of his furtive glances. 'We are going round by a different way.'

'I thought there were police up there,' said I.

'So there are : but it is hilly country.' With which cryptic remark we had to be contented, and rode on in meditative silence, rather anxiously.

And now we came over a little ridge and saw before us a new settlement of tents and a few houses, the hamlet of Deh Kush. And a surprise was beyond : for there in absolute solitude wound a road, the unfinished motor road from Khurramabad to Harsin. Between us and it rode a policeman in pale-blue uniform.

He was more surprised than we were. He showed it more at any rate, and came spluttering up to ask if I knew that I was in Luristan. I said that I not only knew it, but was on my way to call on the Governor : the famous letter was produced, with its usual impressive effect. It took a little time, however, to live down the shock of our appearance, and somebody had to be blamed.

'One can't travel like this in the middle of the wilderness,' said the policeman, turning on our guide. 'Why are you off the road ?'

This question has never been solved. The man looked so guilty that I felt my worst suspicions confirmed, and only later, when I noticed how *every* Lur looks guilty when confronted with the Law, began to think that perhaps he was innocent after all.

Meanwhile we were not to be allowed to go on. We should have lunch first, said the policeman, anxious *couïte que couïte* to make us do something we had not intended. It is tempting to give a soft answer when one knows that it will annoy, and we felt no great aversion to the idea of lunch. But partly so as to go on in the game of contradicting, and partly because it would be taken as a want of friendliness to the villagers, I refused to sit in solitude with my escort under a tree as arranged, and moved up into one of the tribesmen's tents instead.

Here as we crouched over the fire and watched a chicken turning like an heraldic animal on a spit, our feelings gradually softened. Our chance of making Alishtar that night was gone—but what is a day more or less on a journey ? The policeman for his part had made us sit still when we wanted to go on, and could therefore feel authority safe in his hands. He began to look with appraising eyes at my aluminium water-bottle and to soliloquise on the usefulness of such objects to lonely guardians doomed to live far from their fellows in the hills. As for the Lurs, they drew gradually near to the one subject in which they are chiefly interested just now—and that is the subject of clothes.

They were given a year long ago to obtain European coat and trousers and a Pahlevi hat. No one had thought of doing so : fairy tales, which know human nature, always give a year and a day and the hero does not begin to think about the matter till the last evening. Now a new message had come through from Teheran, and five days were to see Luristan dressed and shaved, long hair being considered incompatible with a civilised appearance. To procure a City suit in five days in the wilds of Luristan, is a joke only fit for *Punch* or the Persian government : the tribesmen gazed in unhappy perplexity while the policeman expounded.

'Do you think the Ferangi clothes keep rain and snow out as thoroughly as these felt coats ?' I asked at last.

'Oh no,' said the policeman.

'I should think the Pahlevi hat would not last long in this climate either ?'

'No time at all,' the tribesmen said in chorus, with obvious joy.
The policeman put down my water-bottle.

'It is an order from the Shah,' he observed with dignity; and suggested that it might be time to move on. The passes, he explained, were not so dangerous as before lunch: he did not think I need be escorted. If I used the water-bottle myself he would not dream of depriving me: he had not seriously thought of suggesting it. And would I tell the Governor how pleased I was with his services?

So we went on, keeping the Gatchkah and its hills well on our left, and making for the motor road, trodden, as far as one could see, only by the hooves of innumerable donkeys and mules. It is not yet completely finished, and the last and safest part of it, where cars do run between Kermanshah and Harsin, is apt to be raided now and then, and was so five days before I got there. Out here in the wilderness it seemed to sun itself in perfect peace, winding out of a rolling green country for sheep which rose to bolder hills and jungle patches in the south-western little-known valleys of Dilfan. As we rode through the quiet light of the afternoon, we saw no trace of human beings except the heaps of stones by the roadside and one white-clad shepherd with his flock on the slope of a hill.

This low long ridge is called the Firuzabad Pass, and we knew we had crossed the watershed when we came to a little stream welling out from rocks on our left hand. The water was velvety and bright as a bird's eye, and ran down towards Alishtar; and we followed and came in the sunset to the opening of the plain and to a little colony of tents on its western edge.

Here under the open awning of the chief tent we waited while the Khan was told of our arrival. The Lurs, like the little girl with the curl, are very nice when they are nice, but when they are not they are horrid—and one rarely knows which it is going to be. There is an anxious interval when one comes to a strange tribe and waits to see. This anxiety is not confined to the stranger: I noticed that all my native guides shared it, and used to hasten to explain my presence with an *empressement* that could only be described as apologetic. On this occasion the explanation was accepted with reserve. The cunning little green eyes of our host wandered from me to my kit-bag with an obvious thought behind them, while he made no effort at conversation.

Time is the great factor on these occasions. We sat in silence

and watched the twilight, while the smoke from its many tents floated like mist over the plain. Goats and ewes were coming to be milked ; their shuffling feet and low half-bleatings filled the air with a sense of evening peace. A tree showed like lace against the distance, and the new road, going diagonally across to the gap of Khurramabad, lost itself in the dusk. Our horses crunched chopped straw out of the mud-built mangers close beside us—oats being mostly unobtainable in the country : they tossed their heads with a little jingle of bells now and then. And in the eastern sky the mountain of Alishtar and the range of Sefid Kuh were pencilled with so clear and pure an outline that the very sight of them filled the mind with quietness.

Whether it was the beauties of nature, or the more immediate prospect of supper, or just the fact that they were getting used to the sight of us, the Lurs gradually began to settle down for conversation with a show of friendly interest here and there. Unlike those of Qal'a Kafrash, these were real nomads who never live in houses. They are Mumivend. In summer they inhabit the fringe of Alishtar, in winter they move with all their tribe to their 'Garmsir,' the warm valleys round Tarhan in the south-west. They were going to start in about a month's time, in November. The government is trying hard to make them build houses so as to keep them in one place, but they are unanimous in disliking the change, and say that to winter in the north means losing a lot of their stock : and as the government can penetrate only with an armed force south of Alishtar or Khava, the nomad will probably have his way for some little time yet.

I had a heap of straw put under my sleeping-sack that night and lay beneath the tent awning with the flocks and herds around me and Hajji by the horses close at hand.

Next morning we set off across the plain. On the far side, the Fort of Alishtar showed in a patch of trees. It is now the seat of law and order and the residence of the Governor of Northern Luristan ; but three years ago it would have been impossible for a Persian policeman or indeed for any ordinary traveller to get within miles of it. Mir Ali Khan ruled there like a king. He held the whole of North Luristan, and harried Nihavend on one side and Khurramabad on the other, so that the plainsmen dared not sleep without their city walls. The Lurs were devoted to him : the Salsile, to which his own tribe of the Hasanavend belong, are said even now to number 20,000 fighting men, and

many others joined forces with them : he fed, so they say, 300 guests daily at his table, and kept half a million tomans in gold together with his five wives in the castle. I met his sister-in-law at Alishtar, a young woman educated in Teheran with no sympathy for the tribes, and she told me her despair when they brought her to live up here, with no doctor to attend to her when she fell ill, with no one but the wild tribeswomen to talk to, and with no prospect of ever getting away.

The government finally decided to finish Mir Ali Khan. It sent an Armenian friend of his, called Sangari Garkhan, to join in some small expedition against a neighbouring potentate. The campaign was successful, and the two were riding back side by side over the Khurramabad Pass into Alishtar, when the Armenian suddenly turned on his ally : the government troops he had with him closed in and shackled Mir Ali Khan and hurried him off, before his men could rally, to Khurramabad, where he was instantly hanged. Meanwhile the Armenian entered the fort as a friend, took possession in the Shah's name, and proceeded to overrun and disarm the plains of Alishtar and Khava and to destroy any building that might be turned into a fortress. These ruins are still visible here and there. He was rewarded by being made Governor, but has since come to a bad and suitable end.

So our guide told us, as we jingled leisurely over the wide cultivated plain, crossing branches of the Kahman stream at intervals and gradually drawing nearer to the hills of the eastern edge and the range where the Kahman rises 'in a grove of trees like Paradise' they say.

It was a warmer climate than Khava, with rice and opium in the ground, and reeds in the water where a pale-yellow water-snake darted its head at us. In the stubble fields grew quantities of small arum flowers, dark red and close to the ground ; and after we had ridden an hour or so we came to the area of villages evidently very old, for there are tombstones here and there belonging to the early centuries of Islam—rectangular blocks of stone with a carved knob at each corner and a raised centre, covered and surrounded by script or ornamental arabesques. There are mounds, too, and a great mound and a village called Geraran, the largest in Alishtar, near the opening of the Kahman gorge on our left. Here, said our guide, the treasure of the Fire Worshippers was buried, though no one has found it yet.

Our guide was very friendly now, and sang in the Kurdish way, as they call it.

'Baina, baina,
Nazaram baina ;
Agar dust nam diri
Shau neilim tanha.'

Baina, baina,
Look on me, baina ;
If thou too lovest it
I shall not sleep alone.

or

'Kai lowa, lowa,
Murgakam lowa ;
Jerkam arraye
Dusakam kowa.'

Kai lowa, lowa
My bird lowa ;
Because of my love
My liver is like a kabob.

At the end of each line the Ai, ai, ai, of the refrain, wild and shrill with a high little sob at the end, was very like the yodelling of the Alps but fiercer, as a purring tiger is like a cat.

When we reached Alishtar Fort, we alighted in the courtyard of Kerim Khan, the brother of the Mir Ali who had been hanged.

We felt we were in a metropolis, for though it is a small hamlet, the presence of the castle, the government and police, a school with twelve scholars, and the beginning of a garage in view of the future road, all make it busy.

Kerim Khan was at home, an engaging young man with his Pahlevi hat at a rakish angle : but the two ladies, his wife and mother-in-law, were having a bath, and repeated messages to ask for the key of the best room, and to say that we were hungry, appeared to have no effect at all : an answer would be sent, that little Iran's face was just being soaped, or something of the kind. It was getting on for two o'clock and my host and I, both faint with hunger, sat opposite each other on a carpet in the second-best room, too languid to speak. Kerim would shake his head at intervals and ask me to observe how husbands are treated in

Luristan : I would try to comfort him by remarking that such things are known also to happen elsewhere : and another message would be sent to the recalcitrant ladies, with no effect at all.

They finally appeared, about four o'clock, very fresh from their ablutions, and found us in a state of exhaustion disposed to accept any apology so long as it were followed by food : and the *pilau* was not long in coming. Kerim continued to mutter to himself between the mouthfuls of rice, but it was in the uncertain tones natural to one man when two determined females present a united front. The Mother-in-law was really alarming : she looked like something between a frog and a grenadier and her manner revealed an independent income. She told me that her first husband used to beat her on the head before she got rid of him ; I could not help feeling a secret admiration for anyone brave enough to do so. As for Kerim, he was as wax in her hands. He retired after lunch into the yard where the old Tartar had relegated his own mother among the servants. The two ladies sat on in the best room, one on each side of me, and explained how they were Christians in all but name. They hated Luristan, and hoped to wean Kerim from his delight in living with his own tribe on what was left of his land ; they liked to live in a town, and had friends among the missionaries. 'They taught me that Love is all that matters in the world,' said the Mother-in-law, with her two grandchildren on her knee ; 'and you cannot think how I love these children ; all except that one over there,' she added, nodding towards the eldest little girl who sat neglected in one corner : 'I cannot bear her.'

This peculiar interpretation of Christian precept roused me to some mild protest ; I think I said it was hard on the little third girl. A glassy look appeared in the lady's heavy-lidded eyes. 'That is love,' she remarked shortly : 'It comes and goes as it wills.' And that was that.

As a Christian convert, the Mother-in-law must have been distinctly embarrassing. I have never seen anyone with quite her uncompromising brutality. She had a pretty young stepdaughter of seventeen in the house, whom she had snatched from the school in Hamadan where the American Mission was educating her, and whom she now kept as a servant, never allowing her to come into the best room, to sit with us at meals, or to have any dealings at all with her own sort : no husband was going to be found for her, so that the child had nothing but a life of oppression and

drudgery to look forward to, with no escape. She spoke good English, and told me her troubles that night when she took me down into the stable to have a hot bath ; but I was never able to speak to her again, for the jealous old lady's eye was on us, and it would only have brought down more punishment upon her.

The Mother-in-law had the virtues of her defects : I imagine that she had never in her life been afraid of anyone or anything. Some wild tribesmen murdered her factor on an estate near the Asadabad Pass, and the police gave it up as a bad job : but she herself crept out of her bedroom one night, left the light burning so that the villagers might not notice her absence, and went to search for the assassins in the hills. After five days she found them, got her own people to round them up, and handed them over to the authorities.

The two ladies were very kind to me, and it was restful to feel oneself in a perfectly safe place for a while, with the possibility too of getting a wash. By the evening, I knew all the society of Alishtar Fort. Kerim took me to call on the Governor in his castle, and I was received in a long audience chamber and introduced to the Chief of Police, a pleasant Nihavendi with delightful manners whom I was to get to know better later on. The Governor is also a Lur, from Dizful, with the good manners of the well-born Persian, but made rather melancholy by malaria, which is rampant near the rice-fields. He asked Kerim about me, in a sad and tired voice, and Kerim's sketch of my history, status, and future intentions, all made up on the spur of the moment, was a much more plausible affair than I could have managed for myself.

The castle is a mud-brick square filled with buildings, where the Governor's apartments, the police quarters and prisons, the clerk's offices and the school, are all congregated. It looks neglected since the great days of Mir Ali Khan. In the long audience room the paint is peeling off the walls : they still have a dilapidated gaiety with hunting and battle scenes, ladies in coaches marooned in rushing streams, Persian officers in baggy trousers leaning on small cannon with field-glasses in their hands—the Victorian Age in Luristan in fact, but with the sadness of decay about it all. Down below, in a half-circle round a melancholy table, sat the Governor and a dozen visitors or so. It was a silent gathering : the Governor was busy reading petitions, and only asked a question or two between one document and the next : he inquired

if I could take his photograph : after another interval he got up, went to the side of the room, and stood there while two valets changed him into a pair of very elegant trousers : we all continued to sit in silence, our eyes fixed delicately either upon the floor or the ceiling : when the operation was completed, and a suitable coat had been added to the other garments, the Governor returned. With a noticeable increase of cheerfulness he informed me that he was ready for his picture, and we all removed to the courtyard, where I took him in an official attitude beside his fountain.

The second day of my stay was pleasant but uneventful.

We walked a mile or two northwards to the site of the vanished city which must have been the Alishtar mentioned by the fourteenth-century geographer Mustawfi. No buildings remain, but there are many of the stone tombstones which we had seen before, and shards of thirteenth- to fifteenth-century earthenware strewn about. All the people here spoke of an old minaret which seems to have resembled the one at Saveh, a round brick tower ornamented with raised scrolls and geometric patterns : the government troops levelled it to the ground three years ago when they feared a rising of the Lurs. Of the more ancient graves, for which Luristan is chiefly interesting, there was no trace so far east as Alishtar ; they were to be found, I was told, in Dilfan.

My idea was to travel ostensibly westward to Harsin, but in reality to make a detour and look at these graves in Dilfan on my way. I had a shock therefore when Kerim told me that the authorities could not let me risk the journey alone, and that the Head of Police, the Sardari Naib Khan, would himself escort me along the new road. This came, I felt, of making myself too important : it is always a difficult matter to strike the correct balance, for one wants to have one's wishes attended to and if possible not to be either deported or interned as a vagrant, but on the other hand one also wishes to remain insignificant enough to be left alone. I thought, however, that if I waited till the Chief of Police were separated from his colleagues, I might stand a better chance with him, and perhaps even persuade him to help in the looting of a grave or two : there was anyway nothing for it but to accept their arrangement with as great an appearance of pleasure as I could.

I said farewell to Kerim Khan and his ladies next morning, and made westward again for the nomad land. We started alone :

the Sardari Naib was to meet us at Deh Ram, an hour or so on our way.

When we got to this village there was no sign of him either there or on the plain behind us. I thought he could easily overtake our baggage animals, and decided to push on to the tents where we had lodged before, and so get across the flat ground while the day was not yet too hot. Both Hajji and the Lur had doubts about this plan and followed reluctantly: they did not think the Sardari would like those particular tents, whose loyalty appeared to be doubtful: but I was tired of watching my escort crumple up whenever we met anything in the shape of a policeman, and remarked that what was good enough for me was good enough for the Sardari, a monstrous heresy which reduced them to silence.

The day was fine: the light lay bright on the folds of the hills: the plain of Alishtar, like a shallow bowl with crested mountain rim on all but the western side, basked in sunshine and peace. The apricot garden round the fort dwindled to a small dark patch in the distance behind us. Villages grew scarce on either hand: the rice-fields changed to stretches of stubble or empty ground where sheep and black goats grazed. We were drawing near to the gentle western rise of the plain when, looking back, we saw the Sardari and an escort of five horsemen riding not in our direction at all but away from us northward towards the Gatchkah Pass and Khava.

Presently one small figure detached itself and came galloping towards us. It turned out to be a policeman almost incoherent with rage. He took no notice of me, women in Persia being considered so insignificant that their families and not they are responsible for any foolishness they manage to commit. My family for the time being were Hajji and the Lur, who bowed under the torrent without thinking to blame me and began to pour fulsome apologies into the ear of the Law. We retraced our steps, and came with ruffled feelings to where the Chief of Police, with two more policemen, two small tribal headmen, and his Mirza or secretary carrying an enormous red account book, were all waiting for their lunch and for our truant selves in a colony of six or seven tents at the foot of the Gatchkah hills.

The Sardari Naib was not at all put out and welcomed me with great friendliness. Nevertheless, when I mentioned that Dilfan and not Khava was my objective and that I had no wish to

travel in the direction in which he was going, he was rather non-plussed. I spent the whole of lunch-time trying to convince him of the importance of prehistoric tombs, and felt more and more how prudent it had been to get him away from the official atmosphere of Alishtar Fort before tackling so difficult a subject. His natural amiability, however, was on my side. He was a pleasant middle-aged man with fair features tanned by the sun and charming manners even to the poorest shepherds we met: by the time lunch was over, the aims of archaeology appeared to interest him and we had come to a compromise on both sides: I was to go with him across the Gatchkah and spend the night under police protection in Khava, and he would find someone to take me into the southern country next day.

To visit a camp with the Chief of Police was like disturbing an anthill, so great was the dislocation and agitation our arrival always caused: it was as if our appearance made the Lurs wonder which of their crimes had found them out. We were not liked, for wherever we went this matter of clothes was looked into, and someone would snatch the caps off the people's heads in honour of the new regulations: when we halted, a policeman sat in a tent close by and had in one Lur after another to cut off his hair. The poor people came back to our circle round the fire with sheepish looks, complaining of the cold on their ears and saying: 'Wallah, this is civilisation,'—while the Sardari Naib, sitting cross-legged with his curved sword in his hands, would talk to the headman in the politest way: 'In the service of your Exaltedness let me explain, oh my soul,' he would begin, and would go on to specify how the Shah, being like God on this earth, can order people to go about even naked, and there is nothing for it but to obey.

With great bustling and pomp therefore we started off at about two o'clock and rode up the stony way to the pass in single file. One man with a gun went ahead as scout and the rest of us followed in a body. The Mirza, his red account book under his arm, black goggles over his eyes, and two enormous pistols in his holsters, brought up the rear.

As we drew near the top, in a narrow defile, we met two muleteers striding down in an opposite direction. I had remained a hundred yards or so behind to take a compass bearing, and saw them coming along bareheaded, with black looks: their caps had been taken off and torn in two: and as they passed, muttering

fiercely, one of the escort came riding back to see that I got safely by.

At the top of the steep and rocky climb a small tower guards the pass. On the other side the ground sinks away in grassy slopes to Khava and up again to the ridge of Kuh Garu. Stones of the causeway are visible here and there and the ruins of some old guardhouse.

The upper storey of the little tower was roofed over with wool like a tent and reached by a ladder, and here the six police of the garrison live as best they can. They are not relieved at specific intervals, and may apparently remain indefinitely in the neighbourhood, although in winter the pass is closed and they descend to one of the villages below. There are six such posts, each with six men, dotted between Gatchkah and Tuyaru in the west, and all their stores are supplied once a month from Khurramabad. The Fort of Alishtar is their centre. Here they collect the prisoners, of whom there is never any lack ; on the morning we left, twenty were brought in with chains round their necks and feet and wrists. The percentage of brigands captured, however, appears to be very small : the country is fine for sniping and hiding, and the robber bands are usually made up of amateurs who take to the sport for a week or two and then disperse each to the protection of his own tribe before they are discovered. With all one's natural feeling for the tribesman, the Lur is so treacherous and cruel, and so unchivalrous in his crimes, that one's sympathy goes to the small handfuls of police who keep the country in some sort of order with such very scant means at their disposal. It is not their fault if the effendis of Teheran make them enforce absurd regulations about the people's clothes.

We came down into Khava in the sunset when the cliffs of Kuh Garu shine like opals in a light of their own. Mist lay in the hollows and the air was cold. In the village of Beira where we lodged, in the north-eastern part of the plain beside another ancient mound, the tribesmen had not yet moved from their tents into the winter houses, so that we had another evening in the open, roasting pleasantly round a fire of thorn bushes in the middle of the headman's tent, where his carpets were spread in our honour. One side was open : a long line of black oxen with felt rugs on their backs blocked it and acted as a wind screen : they chewed their feed gently through the night, while we slept as well as we could with rivulets of cold air creeping down our spines : now

and then some tribesman, pirate-faced in the half-darkness, would rouse himself, heap an armful of thorns on the embers, and fill the tent with strange shadows and a fleeting warmth.

Here among the nomads even the universal Persian samovar has not yet found its way, and the water for tea was boiled in a beaked copper jug with the fire piled round so as almost to bury it. Water for washing one goes to look for in the landscape around, and as it was very cold and very public one washed rather little. The Lurs had no soap, but they were very particular to pour water over their hands before and after a meal, and used to warm the second water, so that it had some cleansing property : otherwise they neither wash nor pray, and seem to get on without either of these virtues. They are Shi'as. They give their money to any wandering rogue with a green sash or headband who declares himself to be of the Prophet's family : but they have none of the inhospitable bigotry of many Persian villagers, and are pleased to share their dish with the traveller ; in fact one of the grievances against Jewish and Armenian traders who venture up here to deal in antiques, is that they refuse to eat or drink out of the tribesmen's bowls.

(To be continued.)

Editor's Note.—In recognition of her travels in Luristan Miss Stark has been awarded the Back grant for this year by the Royal Geographical Society.

THE CHINA DOG.

BY WARD COPLEY.

THE china dog stood on a shelf in the window of the little shop which Dorothy and her nurse passed on their way from the hotel to the town. There were other animals among the vases of different colours, blue, red, yellow, which Dorothy had heard the grown-ups speak of as of Valérie china, but somehow the dog had caught Dorothy's attention on the very first morning, distracting it from the dazzling white houses, the avenue of pepper trees, and the blue sky which she recognized with a slightly superior excitement, having, despite her tender years, been 'abroad' two or three times before. She dragged on Louisa's hand. 'Come along, Miss Dorothy,' Louisa urged, but, a willing slave, lingered while the child gazed her fill. One might have been put to it to say of what precise breed the dog was supposed to be—something between a pug and a mastiff, perhaps—but Dorothy did not care about that. She instantly, in her five-year-old mind, raised him to a place above her own toy animals—the bronze poodle, Gritti, the Newfoundland, Rover, gift of an admiring landlady, the cats, Emmeline and Ruby, whom she had always possessed, and whom Mother would, teasingly, confuse, though how anyone could fail to distinguish the difference between them it was hard for Dorothy to understand. A few days later, with one of her lightning decisions, she christened the new favourite Papillon, after the little dog at the Laiterie where Louisa bought the milk for tea, and where there was the notice 'Wurmes Milk ever Teg' for the benefit of English visitors. That the dog at the Laiterie was a small and curly Maltese, and that Papillon meant a butterfly, did not trouble Dorothy at all. The name was incontrovertibly suitable for a French dog in a French shop!

A longing to possess the china dog filled Dorothy's heart and soul, but though, maybe, she threw out a hint of her desires to the devoted grown-ups, Mother and Aunt Rose, who, with the slightly despised Louisa made up her immediate world, Father being only vaguely connected with a black sash worn with pride on a white piqué dress a very long time ago, she quite understood that she was sighing for the moon. Did not Papillon cost four

francs, and did not Dorothy well know how vast a sum that was ? Nearly as much as four shillings, Louisa told her—for this was fifty years ago, when there were no more than five and twenty francs to the pound. Still, though of course Dorothy could not have put such a thought into words, there was a certain odd delight in an unfulfilled dream, and, as the days went by and Papillon still stood on the shelf, she began to feel that he was hers more completely than even Emmeline and Ruby. In the inventions with which, after the fashion of only children, she amused herself by day, in the visions which flitted through her brain as she fell asleep at night, Papillon was now her constant companion, though, after those first casual hints, she never spoke of him to anyone—not even to Miss Marindin, the invalid lady in the flower-scented room on whom she had, for the moment, bestowed the passion of her wayward fancy, rather in the same way that she had bestowed it on Papillon. It was easy to talk to Miss Marindin, almost easier than to one's own grown-ups, but somehow Papillon remained a secret. He belonged to oneself alone, and not even the abandon with which Miss Marindin entered into a game called market-gardens, nor her sympathy when Dorothy unearthed an old croquet set with which she could play on the rough bit of lawn by the front-door, nor the really sensible questions which she asked about the feud of the Frogs and the Jagged Snakes which beguiled Dorothy's mornings on the olive terraces—the round, smooth leaves of the wild arum representing the former clan, and a dandelion's serrated fronds the latter—could tempt further confidences.

Papillon certainly dominated that winter for Dorothy, holding a place in its inner life at which no one, except perhaps Louisa, guessed. The outer life went on, of course, very pleasantly, for indeed it was rather fun to be a little English girl in an hotel in those days, when few children were taken abroad. At the couriers' table maids and valets of different nationalities taught one queer-sounding phrases, and made much of one. Moreover, that all-powerful person, the Manager, would now and again lead one to a cupboard where the dessert was kept—raisins and figs and biscuits, best of all flat little cakes of chocolate done up in coloured tinsel paper with a picture on top. Other visitors besides Miss Marindin paid one a flattering amount of attention—Mr. Andrewes, the old clergyman, for instance, and Mr. Wethered, the artist with the red beard. In a way Dorothy preferred Mr. Andrewes, despite the fact that she did not understand half the words he used, for

he had dug a trap-door spider's nest out of the bank for her and explained, in his courteous way, just how the spider held the door firmly with her legs from inside, so that the nest was safe from intruders. On the other hand, Mr. Wethered was a person of resource and imagination. Collecting such children as he could find in villa and hotel, he had bidden them run with him into the town to eat ices at Rumpelmayer's, and lo ! and behold, a wild rush down the avenue at full speed, Dorothy, the youngest, holding Mr. Wethered's hand. What would Papillon think of it, she reflected, as her little legs flew out behind her. The only contretemps was that she disliked ices, but Mr. Wethered was quick to substitute a cup of chocolate crowned exquisitely with whipped cream.

For a week the Russian Lady, a passing visitor, enchanted Dorothy and made her allegiance to Miss Marindin falter, though Papillon remained enthroned. Dorothy's ideas on the subject of Russians were not so clear as they might have been, but the name had an exotic charm, and she stared with all her eyes when she first saw the gracious creature in the hall. Miss Marindin was common clay in comparison. But favour is deceitful and beauty is vain. The Russian Lady promised faithfully, in her caressing fashion, to play croquet with Dorothy on a certain afternoon. Dorothy waited for an hour—and an hour is a thousand centuries at five years old—but the lady never came. Worse still, she rode off on a donkey, between Mr. Wethered and the French Gentleman, waving and kissing her hand in the most unconcerned manner to the child as she passed. Dorothy flung down her mallet and knew black despair, her head hidden against Louisa's knee. Only the sight of Papillon, standing on his accustomed shelf with his benevolent face and his forelegs a little apart, restored her to serenity when Louisa took her into the town after tea. Next day, remorseful, she carried her best drawing of the Manager's canary as an offering to Miss Marindin, who, happily, never guessed that she had been temporarily eclipsed by a perfidious rival.

The Russian Lady went away, leaving behind her, so it seemed to Dorothy, an atmosphere of unrest. The regular winter people were on the move, and one day there came the dreadful news that Miss Marindin was about to leave. On that very morning a second, even more terrible, blow struck Dorothy. Louisa had errands in the town, and though she showed a peculiar anxiety to hurry, Dorothy managed to cast her usual glance in the window of the

china shop, just to wish Papillon good day, as it were. She gave a cry of dismay and stopped short. The vases, blue, red and yellow, were in their usual places, the other animals too, but Papillon was gone. A common black and white cat usurped the central throne—a mere bit of pottery, not the moon of desire. ‘Oh, Louisa !’ Dorothy whispered in a little voice, too heart-broken to care if she betrayed her dreams or not.

‘Someone’s bought it at last, I suppose,’ Louisa replied stolidly. ‘Come along, Miss Dorothy, or we shall be late.’

‘But was he gone when you came by yesterday ?’ the child persisted, for Louisa had been out with some other maids.

‘I—I’m really not sure,’ said Louisa, with a queer pursing of the lips. ‘Now come along.’

On the next day Dorothy was bidden to a farewell tea in Miss Marindin’s room. Miss Marindin had surpassed herself in the waiting feast. There was just the kind of bread and butter that Dorothy liked, her favourite raspberry jam—‘Miss Dorothy was never a child for cakes,’ Louisa would often observe—and a whole plate of those ‘little pipe biscuits,’ as Dorothy called them, which no one but Miss Marindin had ever given her. The sun shone with especial splendour through the narcissi, the tulips, the mimosa on the table in the window, so that in later years, when even Miss Marindin’s face had faded from memory, Dorothy could see them in her mind, and smell again the delicious scent which filled the air. Miss Marindin was her most charming self too, telling delightful stories, inventing the most entrancing variations to the market-garden game.

The time sped. When Louisa knocked at the door Dorothy thought that she must have forgotten the extra half-hour accorded by special request of Miss Marindin, by special favour on the part of Mother, but it was not so. ‘We mustn’t keep Louisa waiting,’ Miss Marindin said, as she always did, but she did not bend at once to kiss Dorothy as on other occasions. She rose instead, went to the chest of drawers that stood in the corner, and opened one of the drawers. Dorothy watched her, wondering, but glad of any excuse for delay. From the drawer Miss Marindin took a parcel, wrapped in paper, with coloured string. ‘There’s a keepsake,’ she said, in her gay and gentle voice.

‘For me ?’ Dorothy asked, not quite understanding this new word.

‘Yes, for you.’

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Dorothy's eyes sparkled. A present? What could it be? She fingered the string eagerly and whispered: 'May I open it?' 'Of course. But be careful. It might break.'

Dorothy slipped from her chair and went to Miss Marindin's side. 'Please—will you open it?'

Miss Marindin's skilful fingers untied and untwisted. 'Now,' she said to Dorothy.

Dorothy burrowed into the paper as it lay, loosened, on Miss Marindin's lap. The thing inside was of a queer shape, and stuck out in different directions. She touched a cool and smooth surface, beautifully curved, and there, amazingly, was Papillon—Papillon himself.

Dorothy's eyes, wide with excitement, looked up into those of Miss Marindin. She quite forgot to say thank you, for indeed thank you is an inadequate phrase when a miracle has happened. How could Miss Marindin have guessed? And how could Dorothy, for one instant, have thought the Russian Lady, or indeed anyone in the world except Mother, nicer or more beautiful than Miss Marindin?

She went to bed in an ecstasy, with Papillon on the table by her side—so happy that she thought she could never be naughty, or cross or unhappy again. There was such a warm, comfortable feeling inside her that it did not even matter very much when Miss Marindin drove off next day in the omnibus, with her maid, and the bouquet which the Manager had given her. Dorothy stood by her mother's side, waving a farewell with one hand and clasping Papillon in the other.

'I'll never, never, never forget Miss Marindin,' she said earnestly, as the omnibus drove away.

NEW PASTURES FOR MARY JONES.

BY HERSELF.

I.

I HAD been a shop girl for a fortnight ; a lady companion for two whole days ; a nursery governess for eight months ; when my godfather, a rich and childless saint, came out of his splendid isolation to wonder if I would like to become a secretary. If so, he would pay for a course of lessons in shorthand and typewriting without which, so rumour went, no one nowadays could hope to get an appointment.

As this excellent man had never before done anything for me beyond giving me a Bible and his blessing, it seemed politic to encourage such a change of heart ; and I wrote by return of post accepting his offer, and, lest his interest should lapse, saying I wished to begin my studies at once.

The city had not yet opened its doors to Woman. Barely was she permitted to get a toe inside—much less her whole body. Her art in peaceful penetration was still in the learning. It was thought by sundry relatives who had not lifted a finger to help me in my need, ‘hardly nice or modest for a young girl,’ etc. . . .

At which I laughed and went my way.

The offices where I was taught shorthand and typewriting (if they could be dignified by such a name, being merely a couple of rooms about the size of a large double bed) were at the top of a high building in Cornhill. In the first of these were squeezed three young women, three tables, four chairs and half a dozen typewriters. In the inner office Miss Newell reigned alone, except when I went in for a shorthand lesson, or she interviewed someone about business of a private nature.

Naturally the city in those far-off days did not cater for women. We all brought sandwiches and made our own tea. Our hours were ten in the morning till five o’clock, during which I sat in a din of clanging machines—bearable so long as I was assisting in the making of it—indescribably awful when I was studying shorthand. Yet I enjoyed the life. It was life, not creeping death

like my late occupation. Though truly rather a violent contrast to the monotony of the schoolroom and the prattle of babes!

Here reporters dashed in to dictate their notes direct on to the machine. Small, perspiring boys too with urgent briefs to be transcribed, who squirmed impatiently on the only vacant chair or rubbed their backs up and down the lintel while they waited for the goods ; scampering off again with the clatter of falling planks on the uncarpeted stairs. And, more leisurely in their gait, but no less pressing as to output, came authors with MSS. to be pulled into shape and made readable. I remember I fell in love with Merriman, with his height and his curly dark hair, and his adorably shy way of asking us to revise his spelling which he knew to be shaky.

After I had been a fortnight in Cornhill I was promoted to typing briefs which, since they must be guiltless of punctuation and erasure, was like presenting me with a pass certificate.

My godfather had paid for a six-months' course of instruction, but at the end of five Miss Newell pronounced me sufficiently *au fait* in both typing and shorthand to seek remunerative employment. I, therefore, immediately went West to try my fortune. I had that very morning seen an advertisement for a lady stenographer at an address in Northumberland Avenue, and off I went to apply.

Among a bewildering number of name-plates ranged up the sides of a large entrance hall at the nose of the Avenue, I found the one I sought ; pursued the trail up a gloomy flight of stairs ; lost it at the top, and picked it up again at an open doorway where a black commissionaire, flashing a perfect set of teeth at me, expectorated loudly on the mat, wiped the spot dry with his heel and, extending an ebony hand through the empty ante-room, invited me to enter the smaller one beyond.

Here a noisy altercation, in no way interrupted by my entrance, was in full swing. A big, heavy-eyed man, sitting at a desk in the centre, pointed to an empty chair and on it I sat and waited. After listening to one voice and then another, it needed no special acumen to decide that he and the little dried-up man standing at his elbow were Americans ; while the third and younger was undoubtedly English. In the window, with her back to everyone, sat a girl at a typewriter. I think she was reading a novel. All three men kept their hats on, and presently two of them went out, leaving the big, swarthy one—whom I took to be the boss—in possession of the field and the best of the argument.

If I thought I was now going to have my innings, I was greatly mistaken. Pushing his topper farther back on his shock of dark hair and cutting a fresh cigar, he proceeded to immerse himself in a pile of loose papers. A fly droning lazily in and out of a shaft of sunlight, and ever and anon a surreptitious cough and the sliding of a boot across the coco-matting in the outer doorway, with the occasional turn of a leaf, were the only sounds that disturbed the silence.

I studied the face opposite me. The type was unfamiliar, and I tried in vain to supply a suitable mentality. Suddenly, while I was deep in psycho-analysis, the object of my scrutiny looked up, tilted his hat on his nose and blowing a cloud of smoke through his full lips, said gently : ' Damn that fly ! ' Then seeing me smile : ' Waal, I guess you know shorthand and typewriting.'

I said I did. Whereupon he tossed me a notebook and a pencil and without a pause began to dictate. It was a short letter. But when I was asked to read my notes aloud, I could get no further than ' Dear Sir,' the page was a quivering, unintelligible tangle of unknown signs.

' Say, wot's the wage you wornt,' he drawled.

' Twenty-five shillings a week,' I whispered in a shaking voice.

' Holy Moses—*waat?*' he shouted, springing to his feet and thrusting his chin out at me.

I repeated my demand with more assurance this time, because I was not going to be intimidated by that sort of man—no, certainly not !

He lifted his hat as though to cool his head, said something about his great-grandmother's bonnet, clapped it back again on his nose and opening his eyes wide like a newly awakened owl fairly bawled :

' Why, I could git the best sten-o-grapher in Noo Yark for that figure ! '

' Could you ? ' I said quietly. Instinctively I knew this for bluff and, greatly resenting his tone, rose and held out the notebook over the desk.

He looked at me speculatively for a full minute without taking it. Then said in a singularly gentle voice :

' Hold on there ! You can leave your ad-dress ! '

I wrote it at the foot of the palsied hieroglyphics which had been my undoing and without another word walked out. As I passed into the ante-room his stentorian voice rang out behind me :

'Come here, you charcoal sketch, you—where's that mucky-faced . . . ?'

'Yuss-sorr !'

The black commissionaire bounded forward, grinning delightedly and nearly knocking me down in his hurry to answer the summons. That was not a fortunate morning for me.

I had lately acquired the art of mounting to the outside of a bus, not because I had the nerve for it, but because the atmosphere inside these old horse vehicles was generally stale. I climbed up one to-day, and when I began to descend it at the corner of Princes Street, I found to my consternation my petticoat was descending too and showing below my skirt.

Banks, banks, everywhere to the left of me. And a blank wall on my right ! No ! If only I could struggle so far, twenty yards or so farther up I espied a flight of shallow steps and a modest door which seemed to promise sanctuary. I reached the door and gave it a hopeful push. It yielded, and a man in a tall hat braided with gold, and pink somewhere about his uniform, looked out at me in mild surprise.

'Oh,' said I, by now quite lost to all preliminary explanations, 'what shall I do ? My petticoat's coming down !'

He could see that it was, for now I was clutching a festoon of embroidery round my feet. Nevertheless, he thought a minute before admitting me. Then, kindly :

'You follow me !'

Hampered as I was I could not keep pace with his long strides. Soon he paused and, opening another door which, on my reaching it, appeared to belong to a large cupboard for parcels, said encouragingly :

'Now you just go in there and I'll stand outside and nobody shan't disturb you.'

My petticoat restored to its proper position and my mind to its equanimity I felt quite chatty as the large man conducted me back to the street.

'Do tell me what place this is,' I said sweetly, as I thanked him and wished him good morning.

He looked down at me, infinite pity for my ignorance and kindness struggling for mastery, and replied :

'Oh, it's only the Bank o' England !'

The incident of the petticoat, which in those prudish days amounted almost to a scandal, completely wiped out the lesser

incident of my stupid behaviour at the interview. And I went back to Cornhill prepared to finish my course there before risking another display of nerves like the one just exhibited.

Imagine my surprise then—largely tempered with alarm—when two days later I received an intimation that, if I was still free to take it, the office in Northumberland Avenue offered me the post of stenographer at twenty-five shillings a week!

Miss Newell advised me to accept it. Beginners, she said, must not be choosers ; and I was very lucky to get my foot on even the lowest rung of the ladder at a first attempt—very lucky indeed ! I might have to wait a long time before I got another chance.

So I became the girl in the window at The New York & London Information Bureau where, in stunned silence I listened to strange oaths, ribald laughter, Moody and Sankey hymns shouted blasphemously—every conceivable form of slang and vulgar witticism : where men drank brandy neat out of a black bottle : danced (sometimes very well, at others their capers descended to mere horse-play), quarrelled, fought, cursed black Jackson, who seemed to like it ; and when clients came in turned themselves with the agility of conjurers into polite and efficient business men, to return to their buffoonery the moment the coast was clear.

I might have been a piece of furniture for all the difference my presence made ; except that now and then they showed themselves aware of my existence by some personal remark about my dress or appearance.

As, for instance, when I heard the big dark man, Mr. James E. Wain, to give him his full title, say :

‘ Waal, I guess it was the colour of Miss Jones’s hair there — Say, Miss Jones, is your hair copper or brown ? ’

‘ Light brown,’ I murmured, without turning my head and thumping hard on my machine to drown their conversation.

‘ So there you have it, Priestly—it’s just wot I said ! It’s not copper at all, but just common brown ! ’

Or when, arguing one day about the keenness of a bayonet the young Englishman had that morning brought into the office, Mr. Priestly dug the point of it between my shoulder-blades, asking me cheerfully to judge of its sharpness. I gave my vote in favour of his contention amidst shouts of delighted laughter.

Why did I stay ?

‘ This is office life,’ I told myself, in my crass ignorance, ‘ and I must get used to it.’ My saintly godfather had provided the

money to train me for it : Miss Newell had urged me to come. It must be all right, though appearances were against it ! In my bewilderment my cloistered mind swelled to bursting-point with what I heard and saw. But I supposed it would be much the same in any other business where men congregated. And there were blessed hours when I had the place to myself with nothing but Jackson's furtive expectorations to disturb the peace. Moreover, I had plenty of time to practise my shorthand—perhaps too much ; for I seldom was called upon to take down a letter and had to content myself with secretly registering conversation—a most unsatisfactory exercise as anyone who has tried it knows, with the waste of superfluous words and repetitions contained in any ordinary verbal intercourse. And this was by no means ordinary but full of damns and hideous Yankee idioms.

I had, indeed, so little to do I often wondered why I was there at all. As it couldn't be for ornament, perhaps it was to cast a veneer of respectability upon the place. I grew sick to death of one letter I typed out by the hundred, inviting passengers landing in this country from America to come and be shepherded round the London slums ; a letter which I understood was thrown into the boat-train windows at Southampton and resulted in a certain amount of custom to the office every week.

Then one morning a very welcome change came to me simultaneously with an increase of work. I and my machine were moved from the window in the inner office to a corner of the outer ; and I was given the *London Directory* and told to address envelopes to every name contained therein. I estimated it would take a year at least to do this, and I said so. To which Mr. Wain replied :

‘ Waal, just you scale your eyeballs and begin ! ’

I began. And addressed envelopes rose to a height of six feet and more against the opposite wall before I ventured on my next comment. I knew by this time that those envelopes were to contain a mining prospectus, part of the rough draft of which I had already typed. To my mind it hardly seemed suitable to send such literature to the Archbishop of Westminster, the Dean of Westminster Abbey, the Bishop of London or, for the matter of that, to any of the clergy. And again I lifted up my voice and said so !

Mr. Wain's heavy eyes in their sallow setting fixed me with an amazed stare.

‘ I'll be almighty glad,’ he drawled, ‘ if you'll think again and think different, Miss Jones. Those are the vurry guys to take on a

deal like this ! ' I suppose I looked amused, for he remarked : ' So you caen smile, Miss Jones ! I figured your face was fixed for nothing but Hallylujah choruses ! '

I bit my lip and said no more. And like a tidal wave the stack of envelopes rose and rose and spread outwards, threatening to engulf the fireplace. Then a new element came to share the remaining space, in the form of a strange young man whom I found one morning sitting pensively at the centre table biting his nails. After several hours of silence he thawed into telling me he had been appointed secretary to the company now in course of formation, into which his father had already put some money.

I held my peace. But it seemed odd that with the advent of this young man, who should surely have been in the know, the doors of the inner office became hermetically sealed and he systematically left outside. Many things from then onwards struck me with a feeling of vague uneasiness, the cause for which I could not exactly trace. It began definitely to rear its head, that sense of uneasiness, the day I was called into the private room where I found a conclave of men, amongst whom Mr. Wain and Mr. Priestly were the only ones I knew.

' See here, Miss Jones ! Hold out your hand ! '

I held it out. And Mr. Priestly dropped a silvery grey lump into my palm.

' Waal, wot do you make of that ? '

I turned the lump over. Yellow glinted among the grey and silver.

' Gold ? ' I queried.

' I guess so. And wouldn't you put your bottom dollar in the mine it came from way out there ? '

' Perhaps,' I said cautiously, adding : ' If it ever did come out of it ! '

A queer little laugh ran round the group. Mr. Priestly snatched back the quartz and thrust it rather roughly into his pocket. I was told I could go.

Long confabulations, many strangers, angry voices, low whispers, bustle and prolonged absences marked the days that followed. But still the new secretary had nothing to do but sit and bite his nails. That young man got on my nerves, he looked so abjectly miserable.

' Have you seen the new offices ? ' he said to me suddenly one day.

'The new *what* ?'

'Offices—our new offices in Pall Mall ? Well, I see you haven't. Didn't you know we were moving ?'

Still I gaped. So he told me of our imminent departure from Northumberland Avenue and the flourish we were going to make in the new premises, adding : 'Why not go and have a look in your lunch-time.'

My lunch-time was generally three o'clock ; because, as I could only afford one meal between breakfast and supper, and that consisted of one roll, one butter and one cup of tea at Lyons, I found it better to space the distance fairly, otherwise the hiatus became painful under my waistbelt. There was always plenty of time for a walk after this slim repast, so I returned by way of St. James's Street and easily identified the building in Pall Mall by its pristine coating of white paint. Golden letters too were in process of being erected across the frontage, and in the ground-floor window and the window above carpenters were busy with planks and whitewash.

From then till we actually made our exodus, language of a rare quality was daily expended on the slackness of the British workman. And in the end we came into occupation with only the first-floor front ready for our reception. I was put in the back without a carpet and without a fire, though winter was on us and the place reeked of damp and new paint.

As before, Mr. Tomkins, the so-called secretary, shared this ice-house with me, waiting with ever-increasing impatience for something to do.

The other young Englishman, Mr. Gore, whom I saw daily in the early days of my connection with these people, seemed to have entirely vanished, since a morning some weeks previous to our move when, after a stormy interview with the two older men he had rushed from the private office nearly knocking Jackson down in his haste. I was destined, however, to see him once more. I was quite alone in our new quarters when he appeared. And he made a curious request. Would I mind keeping my shorthand notebooks locked up when I was not in the office and at night ? Or, better still, would I take them home with me ? He was so earnest about it that I laughingly consented.

'Well, that's all right,' he said in relieved tones. And with a nod and a smile he went out.

I never saw him again.

A few hours later, Mr. Wain called me into his room and asked

me if Mr. Gore had been in during his absence : if I knew what he had come about and what he had said to me. His appearance had gone downhill in the last few weeks. Scurf lay on the back of his coat, and his thickened ankles, buttoned by violence rather than persuasion into a new pair of patent-leather boots had caused a button to dangle loosely from one of them. The whole man had coarsened, bodily and mentally.

'And see here,' he added, tipping a black bottle to his mouth and replacing it in a drawer of his bureau, 'anything Priestly or Gore or Tomkins say to you behind my back you report to me !'

'No, I don't,' I said, stoutly.

'And why not ?' His voice was dangerously quiet and his large, owlish eyes held mine in a prolonged stare.

'Because I don't tell them what you say to me !'

He considered this for a full minute, making patterns with a pencil on his blotter. Then he said :

'There's plenty of other stenographers who will do as I tell them, if you won't ! It don't pay the butcher, as you'll find, to be too nice.'

'Yes,' I said. 'Would you like me to go now—leave, I mean ?'

'You can go back to the other room,' he replied. 'I'll ring when I want you again !'

That very same evening at closing-time, just as I was warming my frozen toes at the chief's fire and luxuriating in the thickness of his Turkey carpet, in walks Mr. Priestly. He had been absent all day and, thinking he had come to see his partner, I said :

'Mr. Wain has gone !'

'I know,' he grinned. 'I ain't that god-awful keen on seeing him. See here,' he went on, broadening his smile till his teeth showed, black and uneven, 'I've come to have a little chat with you ! We've got to be friends—you and me !'

Men with broken, discoloured teeth and slippery mouths would do well not to smile when they want to ingratiate themselves. Little Red Riding Hood must have felt very much as I did, with Mr. Priestly coming up to where I stood, when she remarked on the length of the Wolf's fangs. I reached hastily for my coat which I had hung on the back of a chair and, saying I was late and in a hurry, put it on.

'Not so fast, young lady. It's business I wornt to talk. These notebooks of yours, where do you put them when you leave at

night? And wot kind of shorthand do you write? I caent sort of read it!'

'Pitman,' I answered.

'Waal, it ain't any Pitman I ever knew. And you write it all over the shop. It's a real monkey puzzle! Now, this is a straight deal I'm offering you.' He drew a watch from his waist-coat pocket and held it up for me to admire.

'Pretty, ain't it? With these forget-me-nots a-round the face and all? It belonged to my poor wife when she was a-live. I'll give you one the very spit of it, if you'll be a good gurl and keep your notebooks where I know, and date the letters you take and keep straight on instead of jumping about like a flea. And . . .'

'I don't take presents from gentlemen,' I said stiffly.

'And write shorthand people can read—see?'

'I don't take presents or bribes,' I repeated, cramming on my hat.

'Oh, you don't, don't you! Waal, you'd get on a blame sight better if you did. It's all square with Eugene Priestly back of it! But I might make you do wot I ask without offering you either. I'm thinking you're off the right tack—some!'

He still grinned, though rather foolishly, as I edged away towards the door. The gold lace on Jackson's sleeve and cap gleamed through from the landing. He was still there and now within hailing distance. I felt like a tiger cat or a hedgehog—all claws or bristles. Mr. Priestly saw there was nothing to be gained by further persuasion and, picking up his hat and telling me I need not be in such a frazzle, he slunk out of the room and disappeared in the darkness of the stairway.

All indeed was not well with the new company. Greenhorn that I was, even I saw that. Each man playing a lone game wanted me to be his pawn. Up to a point I had been very, very blind. But now I was wide awake—or thought I was!

After that night things happened rather quickly.

Mr. Tomkin's father came to the office and, after a tempestuous interview with Mr. Wain, withdrew his son. So that now I sat alone in the outer room. Then Mr. Wain failed to appear as usual and Jackson told me he was down with influenza and his letters had to be taken to him. This meant that Jackson, too, was seldom at his post. I spent several days without anyone coming near the place, for even the workmen had been withdrawn, though the decorations were not completed.

Then one morning a ferrety-faced little man, top-hatted and frock-coated, skipped quickly into my room, peeped in at the open door beyond, hesitated, and finally drew near to where I sat reading. The manner of his coming was so unusual that I put down the dictionary I was studying and watched his movements with interest. When he was within about two feet of me, he jerked his thumb in the direction of Mr. Wain's roll-topped desk and said :

'Not come yet ?'

'Not yet,' I answered.

Whereupon he tiptoed into the other room and examined every stick in it ; felt the texture of the carpet and muttering in a disgruntled way came back to where I still sat.

'What time do you expect them ?'

'Any time.'

'Been here yesterday ?'

'No-o.'

'Why not ?'

'I couldn't say. One of them has influenza !'

'Pshaw !'

Here Jackson's figure loomed in the shadows outside and became vocal in the approved way. The stranger turned sharply as if to speak to him, thought better of it and with an incredible air of mystery whispered hoarsely :

'Is the furniture theirs or hired ?'

'Hired, I think !'

'A-ah !'

I suppose the amazement in my face made him decide to explain himself a little. For, drawing a long paper from his breast-pocket, he unfolded it tenderly and stuck it under my nose.

'Now, my dear,' he began in fatherly tones, 'do you know what this is ?'

I looked at it, and then I looked at him and said faintly :

'Is it a *writ* ?'

'Right you are,' he exclaimed delightedly. 'And I'm a bailiff ! Now don't you be frightened. I shan't do anything to you ! But here I stay till they come !'

'But suppose they don't come ?' As I said it, I saw Jackson slip noiselessly from the doorway and disappear.

'Then I sleep here !'

'And what about me !'

'Please yourself ! I shan't interfere with anything you do,

except that I shall watch what you do and follow you about if you go into any of the other rooms and listen to everything you say !'

' Well, I'm going to telephone to the Metropole *now*. I don't know Mr. Wain's address, but Mr. Priestly lives at the Metropole and I shall try and get on to him ! '

' Right you are, my dear ! And I shall stand by you and hear all you say ! ' Saying which he came so close I felt his breath on my cheek.

Almost directly I heard Mr. Priestly's voice :

' Yes, guess it's me ! No, I caent come round—got the influenza too.' (Here a low snigger, quickly suppressed, came down the ear-piece.) ' Wot are you to do ? Best quit for a day or two ! Wot's that ? Not had your salary for four weeks, d'you say ? Gee Whizz ! Waal, send me your ad-dress and I'll mail it ! '

I began to say more. But no reply came. He had rung off !

' Can I take my books away ? ' I asked, turning to the little man whose chin actually rested on my shoulder.

' Anything that's yours, my dear ! '

' Nothing else is ! '

So that was that ! I marched out with my beloved dictionary under my arm, a beggar without salary, references or work !

It was no thanks to these rascals that I did not starve. For though I wrote twice to demand it, my back pay was never sent me and I had no private resources to draw on till I should regain my feet. Nevertheless, luck and ill luck were to continue to jostle each other along my thorny path : this queer couple still held me by the hand, as those who run may read.

(To be continued.)

ELLERY HARNETT.

BY ISABEL DONZÉ.

LIFE had been pleasant for Ellery Harnett for as long as his friends could remember. It was known that his mother at her death (Ellery being then eighteen) had left him all the remainder of that fortune for which Ellery's father had married her. His father, when he died some ten years ago, had left him a comfortable annuity, the result of fortunate speculations with that part of his wife's money which had come directly into his hands at their marriage. Ellery's means, which he called 'moderate,' a little to the amusement of his friends, enabled him, therefore, to live as becomes a gentleman, following no occupation, but from time to time making little investments in this or in that, not always in ventures having marketable shares quoted on the Stock Exchange. These Ellery referred to as 'little flutters,' and protested he was too unbusinesslike to know even the name of the company who had benefited by his money. He had a friend in the City, in whom he had absolute confidence, who put him on to a good thing now and then, and on the whole, he had really been pretty lucky.

On this point, his friends were agreed. Ellery had arrived at the age of fifty-six without having had any serious troubles to overcome, without—so far as his social world could judge—any sorrows calling for his own fortitude or his friends' sympathy. The death of his mother had made scarcely a ripple in the life that flowed so smoothly for Ellery. Always an invalid of whom he had seen little, for the last three years of her life, the slight bond that had existed between them seemed to have broken altogether. It was probably a phase of her illness that his mother should seem to view him with increasing antipathy. Certainly it dated from the serious turn that her malady had taken three years before her death, when Ellery came back from his fifth term at Eton, the term that Vernon Awdrey had been expelled. The Awdreys were life-long friends of Mrs. Harnett, and it had been a comfort to her that Vernon and Ellery should be friends.

'I am thankful,' she would say to Ellery, her grave eyes on him, 'that you have Vernon for a friend.' She spoke always with

deliberation, as though her words held more meaning than at first apparent. Ellery was less at his ease with his mother than with anybody, and as he liked to be at his ease as much as possible, he avoided being left alone with her. More particularly after Vernon left Eton, and she had been so very ill, after that queer attack nobody seemed to understand, but which came to be dated from 'the day Vernon came to see your poor Mother, you remember.' He was not likely to forget.

It was sickening bad luck about Vernon. Ellery felt it dreadfully, felt it so much indeed that he could not bring himself to talk about it. All he would say was, that he remained convinced that it was not Vernon's fault, that some other chap was at the bottom of the whole business, and that the dirty cad hadn't the guts to own up. Luckily, Vernon was to be taken on at once by his uncle in Calcutta ; he would soon be making no end of money, no doubt, and able to show those fools at Eton a thing or two. Ellery made no more close friends, either at Eton or Cambridge, but at both places he was very fairly popular.

The War found out Ellery's hitherto unsuspected weakness, and none of the medical boards by which he had himself examined would pass him as fit for active service with a heart that behaved so erratically. He was obliged to resign himself to a 'cushy' job at home, and said he despised himself for wearing an officer's uniform and 'green tabs,' when all he did was to examine passports at various ports. A wearisome, a soul-destroying occupation, having as its redeeming feature that he picked up some strange tales now and again, and made some odd friends of all nationalities, with pasts that probably would not stand investigation. Ellery held that the authorities were too easily suspicious of these queer foreigners, whose motives for coming to England could not all be nefarious. He confessed to being strangely moved with sympathy for some of them, and befriended them so faithfully that, fourteen years after the end of the War, they still came to see him. His 'war souvenirs' he called them : some of them were certainly as ugly.

Barrett, Ellery's butler-valet, viewed these callers with ill-concealed disfavour.

'A lot of dirty dagoes,' he would tell Mrs. Barrett, Ellery's excellent cook and his own well-chosen wife ; 'a lot of dirty dagoes who come here just for what they can get out of the Master.' Moreover, it was the Barretts' firm belief that these foreigners never

came in vain, for Mr. Harnett, even if not able to see them, would give Barrett instructions to hand Louis a pound when he called, or would leave an envelope addressed to Guzman. Barrett, in handing over the money or the message, wore an air of ineffable disdain, which so provoked one little fat man (known to the household as François) that he shook his fist at Barrett and said :

‘ You zink me nozzing but a beggaire. . . . I could tell you somezing about your mastaire . . . ’ but of a sudden had found himself finishing his disclosures to the front door.

Barrett, in a rage at the man’s ingratitude, reported this to Mr. Harnett, who said he feared François had got into bad company. He would have to keep an eye on him.

‘ Meanwhile,’ he told Barrett, ‘ it’s not their gratitude I want, Barrett. It’s a privilege to be able to help them a little, so there’s no call for you to be so upset about their behaviour.’

The Barretts were devoted to Ellery, who was a generous master and quite content to leave the management of the house to them both so long as the running expenses appeared reasonable, and nothing lacked for his comfort. Mr. Harnett was a gentleman of fairly regular habits, Barrett would tell his friends ; that was one of the things that made his service easy and pleasant. He did not entertain very much, and then only a few select guests, and he was often away for months at a time. He travelled a good deal on the Continent, having a love for queer old pictures and books and such-like. He had once heard a gentleman say : ‘ You must have sunk five thousand at least in the pictures and furnishings of this room, Harnett.’ Ellery, looking round his drawing-room, had replied, ‘ I don’t know exactly what I’ve spent on it, but I do know that the result pleases me.’

The room had a certain luxurious dignity, with its green and gold brocade curtains, its tapestry covering all one wall, its large velvet-covered armchairs of the Richelieu period, and its soft-toned Aubusson carpet. But it was a man’s room, and most of the women who had seen it said afterwards that they found it a little too dark, too subdued in its colouring, too cold.

Sophie Lankester, the first time that she saw it, had said with her usual candour, ‘ This room oppresses me somehow. I’m sure it’s all quite perfect, Ellery, and everything terribly genuine, but it just makes me long for white paint and sunlight ! Isn’t that shocking bad taste on my part ? ’

She shook her head and pouted in disapproval of herself,
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and looked so entrancingly pretty that even Ellery smiled at her.

'I was just thinking that my poor room needs no more sunlight as long as you are in it, Sophie.'

Truly enough, Sophie in her gleaming orange gown, with her dazzling skin and the crimson curve of her lovely mouth, seemed to make the room, and even the men and women in it, just a background for her beauty.

She *was* beautiful that night; beautiful, not feature by feature, but with the radiance of youth to whom life has promised everything. Marian Rayne, looking at Sophie, had sighed and thought how soon the world soils the freshness of nineteen.

How soon, Marian little guessed. Only three years more till that dinner-party at the Rockinghams', when Sophie, slightly drunk but still most entertaining, had chosen birthday presents for them all.

'An outsize down cushion for dear old Rockingham' (an earl and a Cabinet Minister); 'a peacock for Juno, I mean Ginevra' (Lady Rockingham, timid, self-effacing, and sitting as if by accident at the head of the table); 'for Marian,—let me see . . .' Then, in a gentler voice, 'A beautiful desert island somewhere very far from London.'

Ellery had sat next to Marian.

'For me?'

The gentleness and the mockery died out of Sophie's face. She had looked at him very gravely.

'Lots of rope, Ellery,' she had said.

Marian remembered how he gave Sophie a little bow before he turned away.

The American on Marian's left was a new-comer to the circle. Miss Lankester was very amusing, but my! didn't she look sick? Consumptive, he guessed. Now a niece of his in America. . . . Through his droning story Marian kept her eyes on Sophie. Sophie was certainly very drunk, or else feverish. Her eyes seemed almost glazed, and looked as though they could not focus properly. In spite of make-up, she looked terribly ill. Marian made up her mind to persuade Sophie to come away with her for a rest.

But Sophie went for her rest alone, and only two nights later.

At the inquest, Ellery, giving evidence as one of her closest friends, had almost broken down when he told them how he had done his utmost to persuade her to give up drugs, and of how,

after his last effort, he had tried new tactics, and had kept away from Sophie. He reproached himself bitterly. He held himself to blame for her death. The Coroner, himself affected by the look on Ellery's face, had hastened to say that his behaviour had been admirable, and that the sad death of the deceased, through an overdose of cocaine, might really be looked upon as a happy release from a life that would probably have grown to be a hellish torment. He expressed his sympathy with the relatives and friends of the deceased.

It was strange that nobody had realised quite how much Ellery knew of Sophie until the inquest. He had almost the reputation of being a woman-hater ; they had thought him far too detached to have bothered himself with poor Sophie's affairs. But, evidently, he had cared, and deeply, what became of her, for after this he went abroad for six months, and the Barretts were given directions to keep all his letters until his return.

When he did come back, Barrett thought his master looked ill, and told his wife that he needed feeding up.

'All that foreign cooking ! I don't hold with it myself,' Mrs. Barrett had murmured, preparing a *sole au vin blanc* for Mr. Harnett's dinner.

They soon came to the conclusion that it was more than good plain English fare that was needed to set their master right once more. He seemed quite unlike himself, very restless and irritable. He even told Barrett that he did not want to see 'any of those dirty dagoes' when they called. Barrett felt sure Mr. Harnett must be very ill.

However, Ellery went about London as usual, ordered new suits, went out to dine and to the theatre, and even had more guests to the house than formerly. But his pleasant friendly manner had given place to moodiness. He seemed to be on the watch, Barrett thought, catching his master's eye on him more than once when Ellery was supposed to be reading. And on one occasion when he had said, 'Pardon, sir ?' to a remark Ellery had made, he was told that he had heard nothing of any kind whatsoever. Well-trained servant that he was, he apologised. Nevertheless, he *had* heard Mr. Harnett say something.

Ellery slept, his cheek pillow'd on his white hand, the fine linen sheet drawn well up round him.

Across the bed lay a pale band of light : the rest of the room,

with the dark mahogany furniture, heavy velvet curtains and Spanish leather screen, was still steeped in the shadows of the night.

It was a comfortable bed on which Ellery Harnett slept. Under that valance of wine-coloured brocade was a covered box-spring, with a good thick mattress on top under which the soft, creamy blankets were so well tucked in. The furrows of the wine-coloured taffeta eiderdown were outlined in dull gold braid. On the large square pillow, moulded in its downy softness, lay Ellery's well-shaped head. There was, even in sleep, a deep frown between the eyebrows, and the thin lips, framed in those two hard lines from nostrils to chin, were set in an ironic smile. Ellery's unconscious face was the only thing in the room which did not suggest repose.

Nevertheless, he slept, quietly, deeply, it seemed dreamlessly, while the light gradually filled the room, shifting from the middle to the end of the bed, and shining on the red and gold and blue of its Florentine carving, once part of the reredos in a chapel belonging to an Italian noble family. The four Evangelists, in bas-relief, formed the bed-end, whilst at the other end, above Ellery's head, a panel had been contrived to take a small painting, also Italian, of the Virgin praying in a cloistered hall, with the Angel Gabriel appearing to her. Critics found fault with the pose of the Madonna, with the Angel's hand outstretched in greeting, with the flowers that grew in the garden outside, and attached sinister significance to the goat tethered in the pastoral landscape, where a goat-herd played on his pipes. Ellery professed indifference : he liked the picture for its colouring, that was all that mattered. He cared nothing for schools of painting nor for the motives underlying a work of art. His was merely the appreciation of the amateur, and of the man whose moderate means enabled him to buy such things.

And now the discreet Barrett tapped at Ellery's door and brought him his morning tea and letters. The curtains were drawn back and the April sunlight flooded the comfortable room. Ellery asked the time.

' Eleven o'clock, sir. You did not wish to be disturbed before,' Barrett reminded him.

With something of his old manner, Ellery smiled.

' Quite right, as usual, Barrett.' He took up his letters. An invitation from Mrs. Dornay to one of her boring dinner-parties ; a letter from Sotheran about that book he had wanted to buy ; a

letter from his friend in the City, with bad news about one of his 'little flutters.' Ellery laid it down, and poured himself out some tea, eyeing the letter with that distaste usually reserved for communications from bankers. However, it was not a big loss, he told himself, though it came at an unfortunate time for him. His expenses had been heavy ever since—ever since he had gone abroad. He picked up *The Times*, and sought consolation for his own loss in reading about the financial conditions of the world. When twelve struck softly from his little travelling-clock, Ellery got up.

'Turn on my bath,' he said, when Barrett appeared in answer to his ring. 'You remember there will be two extra to lunch?'

'Yes, sir, Mrs. Barrett has made the necessary arrangements.' For the second time that morning, Ellery smiled.

'Excellent woman, of course she has!'

Barrett told his wife that the master seemed more like his old self again.

Arranging his tie in front of his mirror, Ellery studied his face in the glass. He looked older, he thought, but it became him to have that slightly grey hair.

That silly little Mrs. Dornay had once said that he had the face of a successful barrister.

Well, on the whole he had been that, even if only briefed in his own defence. He had defended himself capitally, over and over again, for more than forty years.

'My valued friend and client, Mr. Ellery Harnett!' he said aloud. The face in the glass smiled back at him. Ellery looked over his shoulder before he picked up the paper and his letters and went downstairs.

There would be a fire in the library, because only yesterday he had told Barrett to light one daily until further orders. England still felt chilly after all that sunshine abroad.

His room was gay with the first daffodils. He was examining them when Barrett came in to ask about cocktails.

'Oh, I rather think just sherry, Barrett. I believe those horrid concoctions are going out of fashion at last, and I don't think I shall have them any more, unless I am entertaining ladies.'

'Very good, sir. And I am sorry, sir, but I forgot to tell you that a Mr. Vernon Awdrey called to see you yesterday evening. He enquired most particularly about you, sir, and hoped you were well and seemed very sorry to miss you.'

'Vernon Awdrey!' Ellery's face showed his astonishment.

'That was the name he gave, sir. And he said I was to tell you that he had found out who was responsible for what he called the "Eton mess," sir, he said you would understand. And he said he was sorry not to be able to come again, but he was sailing to-day for India.'

'Thank you, Barrett.'

Ellery lit a fresh cigarette.

Vernon Awdrey. After all these years.

He had heard from him occasionally after he first went out to India, then, with Mrs. Harnett's death, the tie that had bound him to the Awdreys was broken, and he had never heard from them again. Vernon, he believed, had not been able to get over to fight in the War: someone had even told him that Vernon was dead. How had he found out who was responsible for that trouble at Eton? He supposed the dirty cad had at last confessed. . . . Then he smiled to himself. He had told the story so often that even he believed it. . . .

Anyway, Vernon had been a fool to take someone else's punishment, and fools must pay the penalty of their foolishness. Let them suffer. Let them also die? No, not that; only suffer.

Ellery's day was going wrong, but here was Barrett with the sherry. A glass of that before Mortimer and Lawrence arrived, and he would be himself again.

Then, he *had* been somebody else, even if only for a moment? 'Maudlin is what I'm becoming,' Ellery told himself, 'positively maudlin. Why, I shall soon be thinking that I . . .' but his mind baulked following that wisp of thought any further.

He poured himself out a glass of sherry and held it to the light. Deep orange, like a dress he had seen in this room: the dress worn by Sophie Lankester the first time she had come to dine with him in his own house.

He lifted the glass to his lips.

Mortimer, a former brother-officer in the 'green tabs,' and Lawrence, who had been at Eton with him, were an amusing pair, and Ellery found himself enjoying his lunch as much as his guests apparently did. He had forgotten all about Vernon Awdrey, but on the point of leaving, Lawrence said, 'By Jove, Harnett, I nearly forgot to tell you! Who the devil do you suppose I ran into yesterday in Piccadilly? Bet you can't guess!'

'Vernon Awdrey,' said Ellery quietly, and Lawrence became a bore whom he longed to push outside and shut the door on.

'How the deuce did you know?' Lawrence, in his surprise, was coming back again.

'He came to see me. We've never quite lost touch, you know, though he didn't care to meet anybody from those days.'

'Funny thing,' Lawrence said, 'I must have seen him just before you did, because he gave me a message for you. I was to tell you he had found out about that Eton . . .'

'I know,' interrupted Ellery, 'he told me.'

'Did he tell you who it was?'

Ellery nodded, and opening the front door a bit wider, said, 'Doesn't pay to rake these things up though. Let sleeping dogs lie, I say.'

'And, by Jove, that one *did* lie—what?'

Lawrence, enchanted with his jest, shook Ellery warmly by the hand, and eventually took his departure.

Ellery was suddenly, and it seemed for the first time, conscious of the stillness in his house, the oppressive stillness. Damn that fool, Lawrence! What did he want to remember that for, just as he was leaving?

Ellery poured himself out another brandy, and sipped it slowly. Was Fate taking a hand in the case at last? Well, let her. He had Harnett, good old Harnett, briefed in his defence as usual.

To Barrett, who came in answer to the bell, 'I'm going out,' he said, 'and I shall not be back till I come in to dress for dinner.'

Where should he go? Not to his Club, to meet old bores like Lawrence. It was a fine spring afternoon, he would stroll to St. James's Park first, and see what plans occurred to him for his distraction.

'Distraction?' 'Amusement' was surely the word that he wanted. 'Distraction' suggested that one wanted to have one's mind kept from brooding over unpleasant matters. 'Amusement' was what he had intended to say.

Those daffodils now, how pretty they were! He stopped for a closer look, admiring the pale gold of their outer petals, the deep-orange-coloured . . . (sherry-coloured?) . . . corona.

He walked on, but now Sophie in her orange dress accompanied him.

She walked with him through St. James's Park, as she had walked with him in Paris, in Berlin, in the Tyrol, at Capri, as she would walk with him for ever.

He looked at the prim nurse coming towards him pushing a pram. Supposing he stopped her, and asked her what she thought of the lady who walked in an orange evening-dress in St. James's Park on an April afternoon ? He smiled at the idea. The prim nurse would not stop to answer him, she would tell the large policeman over there to keep an eye on him. An eye on Ellery Harnett !

It was only his imagination. Nobody else saw her. In Paris, he had watched their faces carefully at first, but nobody took any notice of her. They even *walked through* where Sophie was. But she was there all the same.

He had left Paris, thinking that so he might leave her behind, for it was natural that Sophie should walk beside him there. But in Berlin, where they had never been together, he found her too. By the time he reached Capri, he had grown used to her company, nor tried any longer 'to drown her in wine,' as he had said facetiously. At last he was so accustomed to her presence that it seemed foolish to remain away from England any longer, with that desire of avoiding her memory which had driven him abroad. So he had returned, and strangely enough, was far less conscious of her presence in London. She had never come to his house yet. She had only walked with him along Piccadilly after the theatre one night, and when he had turned up Berkeley Street, she had gone.

So what matter if she walked beside him in St. James's Park that April afternoon ? He had nothing to fear from her : she was dead and could do him no harm. Not like Vernon, knowing now who was at the bottom of the Eton affair : in fact, who was at the bottom of Ellery Harnett.

Two living knew that now, and two dead.

His mother had not been a dupe like Vernon. 'Dupe ?' 'Fool', surely, was the word he wanted. Hoping against hope, she had let Vernon sacrifice himself for her son, but this had been the death-blow to her love for Ellery, whom she now realised to be all, more than all she had feared. He remembered that episode with the cat : that had been the first time. His mother had wept, his father had beaten him, he had been taken to see a doctor. There had been talk of heredity, of perversion, and much faith had been placed in the discipline of school-life. Ellery had learnt his lesson : the imperative necessity of observing the eleventh com-

mandment. Bearing that in mind, and with his determination never to let himself down, he had got on quite well. He had been able to do all he wanted without letting the world know he was doing it, and he had kept on good terms with himself and the world into the bargain.

"Mental perversion," "dual personality," call it what you will,' thought Ellery, 'I should never have got on so well if I had not known how to deal with the other Ellery Harnett.' He stopped for a moment in his walk, and looked at the lake glimmering in the sun.

'Some people,' he thought, 'would say I was mad, but then in the same breath they could congratulate themselves on their self-control. What is self-control but the governing of one personality by the other? It is they who are mad not to realise it.' A little girl was looking up at him curiously. Had he spoken his thoughts aloud? A queer look came into his face. The child ran away.

'Self-control, I said,' thought Ellery; 'he's not getting the upper hand of me, is he?'

He would go home after all. He was feeling quite chilly.

At dinner, he sat next to Leyland, who had just published that odd book on *Chinese Punishments*. Ellery had never met him before, but had read and enjoyed the book.

Leyland was agreeably surprised at the warmth of Ellery's congratulations, and astonished at his knowledge of the subject. Leyland, an authority on China, had written it primarily at the request of an American society for psychological research. He had been very much interested in the book while writing it, but the subject repelled him somewhat, and he hoped to forget some of the things he had learnt in the course of his work. He explained this to Ellery, who asked with animation if there were other things that he had not been able to say in the book?

Something in his voice made Leyland turn and look at him. Ellery's face had the look of a monk furtively enjoying a dirty story. His thin lips were moist and parted. Leyland met his eyes for one second.

'No,' he answered quietly, 'I published all I learnt.'

As though sharing a guilty secret, they turned away from each other and plunged into conversation with their neighbours.

Ellery was violently excited: too excited for the Ellery Harnett

the world knew. He must not let that other get the upper hand. Just now, for instance, he had used Ellery's eyes to look at Leyland. It was to be hoped that Leyland had not seen him. Seen whom? His double? No, that was when one was drunk. He certainly felt a little queer.

'Hot in here, isn't it?' his neighbour was saying. 'Worst of these public dinners is that they last so long and the rooms get like an inferno before the end.'

So that was it: it was the heat of the room. Ellery drank some wine, and felt better again.

Sophie was waiting for him outside in Piccadilly. He saw her as he said good-night to the hall-porter. He did not mind her any longer. They would walk home together; from her, he need have no reservations, for she knew the other man too, knew him so well that she had died rather than see him again. Poor, silly Sophie! He had been fond of her once, both the Ellery Harnetts had been fond of her once, till the other man had thought that it would be amusing to see what Sophie made of cocaine. The mistake had been to let Sophie see that other Ellery before she knew better than to care. Poor Sophie, who walked beside him now, a ghost in Piccadilly! Impossible even to take her arm to comfort her, though, of course, it had all been her fault. She was so very young. . . .

A girl, going past, looked at Ellery, and said to her escort, 'What did he say?'

'I dunno. Something about being young, I think.'

'Poor old boy!'

They laughed.

At three in the morning Ellery was still trying to think what form his revenge should take. The other man had failed him, the other Ellery had let him down at last. And he had been so good to him all his life, had cared for him like a—what was the expression?—'alter ego,' that was it; had given him his own way, shielded him from blame, and now this! Why, just as he had never let anybody know that he had given Sophie cocaine, so nobody had ever guessed what use he had made of those 'dirty dagoes,' for all those years, in all those ways. Nobody had even known what became of them when Ellery had finished with them.

Ellery looked round his pleasant library with its gay gold

daffodils, and, picking up Vernon Awdrey's letter again, read it once more aloud :

"DEAR ELLERY,—

"I came back to England to settle up the property after my Mother's death, and in going through her papers, I found an unopened letter from your Mother to me. It was written just before her death, and in it she told me of her fears about you. She told me too, that she had guessed that you were responsible for the scandal at Eton for which I was blamed, not that you had ever confessed this, but that she 'knew it as she knew she was going to die'"

'He told her, of course he told her, that other man ! And after all I did for him !'

Ellery's hand trembled so much that he had to put the letter down on the table to go on reading it.

"I hoped to have seen you, but I had only forty-eight hours after finding the letter before I had to leave England, and you were out when I called. I asked your manservant, and Lawrence, whom I met by chance in Piccadilly, for news of you. Their accounts seemed so reassuring that I hope that perhaps your Mother was wrong about you. I have not put into words what she said to me because I do not want to be sued for libel. But, you know.

"That Eton affair is such ancient history that I do not care to rake it up again to clear my name, good enough for most people as it is. In any case, you cannot be considered wholly responsible. I thought I would let you know I knew though, to square accounts."

'You see,' continued Ellery aloud, 'he says I cannot be considered responsible, so obviously, he knows about you. You must have told him about yourself, just as you told my Mother and Sophie. Damn you, damn you, damn you !'

He flung himself into his armchair, and buried his face in his hands. He went on, speaking more quietly as if to someone close to him, 'There is nobody else but you who knew, so there is nobody else to blame. Even Vernon says I am not responsible.' He looked once more at the letter. '"Not wholly responsible," you see ?' He thought a moment, then murmured : 'Pooh ! Anybody can see he doesn't mean that ! Everybody knows that I am not mad ; you simply could not bring a case against me on *that* score ! No, he means that *you* are responsible.'

Ellery looked round him.

'He's gone !' he cried, getting up and running about the room, 'gone while I was reading that bit of the letter again !'

He opened the door, looked in the hall, then ran up to his bedroom, switching on the light over his dressing-table.

'Ah, there you are, you dirty cad ! You thought you would run away from me, did you ? I'll show you !' He went up and shook his fist at the mirror. 'I've got to put an end to you, it's come to that.' He put both elbows on the high table and gazed sadly at the face in the glass.

'I have loved you so, and you have betrayed me. You have sinned too vilely to be forgiven, for such as you there can be no reprieve.' His voice grew more pompous. 'Your further existence on this earth would only be a menace to decent civilisation. The only mercy I can render you . . . ' he paused, listening to himself, 'what comes next . . . ?' "A halter gratis ; nothing else, for God's sake !" Was it you who said that, Sophie, leaning over the table to me ? "Lots of rope," you said ; enough rope to hang myself you meant. Well, now I'm going to. . . . No, of course not ! What a foolish mistake to make !' The reflection in the mirror laughed back at him. 'No such mistake, my boy !' Ellery assured him, 'I'm not going to hang myself instead of you ! But now, how to get hold of that rope without arousing Barrett's suspicions ? What should I be likely to want rope for ?'

He gazed about the room.

'I have it !' he exclaimed, 'to tie up a box ! Of course, to tie . . . no, better still . . .' His eyes gleamed wildly, 'to cord up a trunk !'

The joke was so good that he threw himself on his bed and rolled about with laughter.

'To cord up a trunk ! That's damned clever ! Won't they roar when they hear that at the Club ? One of my best stories that will be. . . . Yes, but I mustn't let Barrett know that you are here. Now, let me see, he will come in there. . . .' Ellery rose, pointing at the door, 'and I will say to him, keeping you here in the shadows at my back, "Barrett," I will say, "have we any rope in the house ?" And he will say "Yes, sir," and then I will say carelessly, "I want a length of rope, Barrett, I want lots of rope, Barrett, enough . . ." No, no, you fool, not that !'

Ellery stood in front of the mirror.

'I shall say, "Barrett, I want a length of rope, to cord up a trunk." Just that, and I will put my head so, and smile at him.' He practised a smile in front of the glass. The whites of his eyes and his teeth gleamed in the bright light.

He rang the bell.

Barrett was a long time coming.

He rang again. Even Barrett was beginning to defy him.

Barrett came, in his dressing-gown.

' You rang, sir ? ' (He saw at once that his master was ill ; he wanted him to go for a doctor.)

Ellery realised that it was going to be difficult to ask for that rope after all. He had not had enough rehearsals, and supposing the other man did not keep quiet . . . ?

' Oh, Barrett, I want some rope.' (His voice was a little thick, but the tone was all right.)

' Rope, sir ? ' (He looks astonished. He must have seen the other man.)

' Yes, rope, you idiot ! Enough rope to hang Ellery Harnett ! ' (God ! The other man had spoken. How was he to cover it up ? His heart was pounding furiously, so that he could hardly hear the words his dry lips were saying) :

' No, Barrett, a length of rope, Barrett, a length of rope to cord up a trunk, you understand ? ' (That was his cue for the smile he had practised in front of the glass.) He smiled.

Barrett kept his head long enough to turn the key on his master before he fled to the telephone.

ALMS FOR OBLIVION.

TIME goes wandering through the land,
Wallet on back, and staff in hand.

Alms ! he cries, give alms to me,
Of deeds which shall forgotten be.

Men grieve and grudge, but all must give
Deeds by which their names should live.

‘ To save my Fatherland I die ;
Shall my grave forgotten lie ? ’

‘ Yield thee to the common lot
Many heroes are forgot.’

‘ The sick I nursed, the hungry fed,
My name shall live when I am dead.’

‘ Nay, now nay, thy deeds I take.
Were they wrought for Glory’s sake ? ’

‘ Time shall ne’er do my name wrong.
My deeds live in deathless song.’

‘ Mortals, dare you Time defy ?
Deeds and song together die.’

‘ What care I for Oblivion !
Let me die, and my name be gone.
The deed is done I was born to do,
The deed was good, and the will was true.
All forgotten ! Be it so.
Yet the seeds I have sowed shall grow.’

M. STYLE.

SWANS IN CONFLICT.

BY A. H. MACHELL COX.

THE inevitable pair of swans was back at the head of the estuary. With an optimism that no experience of spring tides could correct, the female had raked up her pile of seaweed on the same low grassy peninsula that she had always fancied for her moated castle ; and now, disdaining concealment, she sat there in a motionless huddled heap, suggestive of a bundle of snowy linen freshly washed in the river. As I passed on my way to see how the heronry was faring, I was content to keep a respectful distance, having no particular wish to make the closer acquaintance of her ever-vigilant lord and master. The respect had been taught me once and for all some forty years ago, when for a desperate half-mile, in a Rob Roy canoe, I fled for dear life from an infuriated swan thrashing his way over the surface of the winding Granta ; but that is another story. On land perhaps one might try conclusions with such a dragon more confidently ; it is hard to believe tales of a man's leg fractured by a blow of the mighty wing, and, in a rough-and-tumble with no quarter, a man's leg should surely be the more formidable of the two limbs. Nay, I am told that, if only I keep cool under the onslaught, all I have to do is to grasp the angry bird kindly but firmly by the neck, and it will be powerless—for just so long, I suppose, as I can hold on ! I still digress, but meditations after this kind come to most people in the vicinity of a sitting swan.

Two or three hours later on my return, with the water now rising, I came up with a second pair of swans placidly enjoying each other's company and gradually floating nearer to debatable territory. One could imagine no behaviour more innocent of offence, no scene of dalliance more remote from battle, murder and sudden death. Yet in an instant came turmoil not to be averted, turmoil heralded low on their horizon by the nerve-shaking apparition of an outraged proprietor charging frantically upon them and seeming to gather impetus as he flew. The tips of his sweeping pinions lashed the surface at each downward stroke ; the long neck stood out straight and stiff with the head held low, hungry

for the fray. What a picture of silent, concentrated fury ! Too much of an aristocrat is the swan to enter conflict with vulgar clamour, though the tenseness of his malediction under stress is something to remember ; he can well afford to dispense with a war-cry, for the ' swoosh ! swoosh ! swoosh ! ' of those majestic wings in action is a more dread accompaniment than any vocal challenge.

The object of his wrath—the male bird, of course—awaited his coming apparently unmoved, and certainly too unprepared to make more than the hastiest dispositions. And as the distance between them rapidly decreased, one had a brief moment to speculate on the overwhelming advantage that seemed to lie with the attack. To receive the full shock of impact while remaining stationary was surely to invite disaster. But were not the risks after all reciprocal ? Let that vengeful form hold on a few more yards so recklessly, and I had visions of the graceful neck shattered as might be a lance couched against sheer immobility. Heretofore anything I had witnessed of the differences between swans had never amounted to more than the kind of one-sided scrimmage in which honour was easily satisfied with a ' withdrawal according to plan ' on the part of the trespasser. I was to learn how such affairs are conducted when the challenge is accepted. All doubts were speedily dispelled.

The headlong charge ended abruptly with an undignified churning up of the surface, as the aggressor splashed into the water. As if by some settled code of combat reminiscent of wrestling matches at Grasmere, the opponents faced each other. No time was lost over the preliminaries, and in an instant they were at grips. At once I realised that there was to be nothing like quarter-staff play, no stunning exchange of wing-thwacks till one or the other should be crippled and at the victor's mercy. True, on either side the great wings were outspread now as if with the vain notion of enveloping the foe, but that was not the plan of action. How, then ? The knobbly beak could hardly be an effective weapon for vicious in-fighting, nor yet for more scientific sparring at long range. No, but I had overlooked the part that might be played by those muscular and wickedly sinuous necks ; and, as far as I could follow a manœuvre that took me by surprise, the exact procedure was thus. Squaring up breast to breast, each bird leant forward and twisted its beak over its adversary's *left* shoulder to seize hold of the extended right wing. This lock once secured, the pair fought it out on equal terms. With violent wriggles and

turns, propelled by feet and the one free wing, each sought to wrest an advantage from the leverage so obtained. At first it looked as if the aim was the maiming of the captive wing, for the beak, which now and then shifted the hold very quickly from wrist to elbow or vice versa, seemed to grip the limb like a vice and twist it with cruel intent, as a foul wrestler might employ a ju-jutsu trick to break another's arm.

Wholly disregarded as a spectator, I took the time, and sat down with field-glasses, resolved not to intervene whatever happened. And what of the third swan all this time? At the outset she made no pretence of concealing her interest in the conflict, and, keeping only just out of reach, she swam continuously round and round the combatants as they struggled and writhed in deadly earnest. Her behaviour had almost the air of an impartial attempt to keep the ring; but from beginning to end no other bird watched the strange duel. While it proceeded, she drew still closer, and swam faster and faster as if threatening to interpose. The aggressor indeed was keeping an eye on her, and once or twice dealt with the situation by letting go for the fraction of a second to give a lightning stab in her direction. Curiously enough, her husband failed to seize such opportunities and allowed him to resume his grip. Presently, however, there came a moment when both lost their hold during a supreme effort, and I was now able to detect what was undoubtedly their primary objective; for each bird in the ensuing scuffle was clearly striving to 'down' his adversary by sheer weight, and to that end rose on his feet and heaved his bulk up and—as throughout—over to the left. So might the concerted push of Rugby forwards be concentrated in a given direction to screw the 'scrum.' This hustling was supported by a series of vicious pecks calculated to help to break through. But neither was now tethered by a wing, and each succeeded in countering the other's move without achieving his own design. Round they swung, took fresh hold exactly as before, and went at it with redoubled fury.

Straining, tugging, writhing, every muscle in their system was mobilised; but so far neither could claim the slightest superiority. There must be a limit to endurance, a cracking-point. Each fighter seemed conscious of approaching exhaustion, and called up all his reserves for a decisive bout. Suddenly—too suddenly for me to see precisely what occurred—the challenger with a violent twist had broken his opponent's hold, and with the purchase of

his own relentless grip swung his body clear of the water and flung himself on the other's back. And now it became apparent how far more deadly was this style of conflict than any wing-buffeting on land. No quarter could be looked for. To be 'downed' was to be drowned. Pitifully helpless, the worsted bird had in a moment completely disappeared, smothered and overwhelmed ; only a neck elongated to the very utmost and lying along the water still kept its desperate head just clear. Above that neck and parallel with it, stretched the second, intent on finishing the sinister work ; that it did not reach so far by some six inches was due to the downward bend of its bill as it grabbed at the nape beneath to force the loser's head under and have done with it. Hardly could I endure my self-imposed inaction and watch deliberate murder done before my eyes. The next instant, however, I was congratulating myself on such restraint. The female swan had been showing increased agitation while the fight progressed, and at this disastrous climax she began to ejaculate in very femininely shocked tones expostulations that sounded like 'Oh ! oh !' and then quietly sailed in to the rescue. And the demonstration—it was no more—created the necessary diversion. Her demoralised spouse had had more than enough of battle, and fled at his best speed directly he was free. After him splashed the merciless foe ; he overtook him in twenty yards, leapt upon him, and again grimly reached for his cowering head to exact the forfeit. A second time he owed his life to his wife's courage and devotion. A second time he fled in inglorious panic. Determined not to be cheated of his victim, the avenger thrashed fiercely along behind. But what was this ? Whether he had himself received more punishment in the long struggle than he had shown, or whether the intervention of the rescuer had been less mild than it looked, it was now to be seen that his right wing was partially disabled and that he could not keep up. His humbled rival drew up in safety, but greatly shaken and more than ready to acknowledge defeat. The duel, which had lasted without a pause for eight long minutes, was broken off.

The concluding scenes of the drama savoured of comedy rather than the tragedy that had been threatened. Having vindicated his rights of possession so conclusively, the triumphant challenger protruded a proud stomach, puffed out his whole person, and, letting his lordly head sink back into the snowy down like jewellery reposing upon velvet, paraded before the lady, as who should claim the recognised spoils of victory to complete his enemy's humiliation.

She for her part was the soul of loyalty, and, turning her back on him with every sign of disdain, swam over to rejoin her dejected spouse and administer sympathy in his hour of bitterness. From first to last her conduct had been irreproachable, and had certainly compared favourably with that of either brawler. The vanquished, finding that he had nothing more to fear, pulled himself together with as much self-respect as he could muster, and ventured to remain very close to the disputed water, which after all must have been practically extra-territorial. The disturber of the peace accepted his rebuff from the lady without resentment. He contented himself with rising out of the water and flapping his wings with extreme vigour to show himself undamaged ; and when the other fellow, making bold to fling back the defiance, shook out a shower of loose feathers in the process which floated away upstream on the flowing tide to the head of the estuary, his final triumph was complete. Slowly he followed them round the bend, perhaps to recount to his lawful mate his own version of the quarrel and his prowess on her behalf, and to call attention to the feathers the interloper had shed during his drubbing.

NOTE.—The owner of the land on which the nest here referred to is annually built assures me that he has personally known a man whose arm was broken by a swan. He also related to me an interesting experiment he once tried in order to overcome the recurring difficulty of spring tides. He transferred the whole structure, eggs and all, to an old door, which, moored to *terra firma*, should defy the untimely flood. When the sitting-bird, however, suddenly found her home afloat, she arose in panic and, lurching over one side, precipitated the whole nest into the river.

OFFICER'S CHARGER No. 37567.

BY NEAL HARMAN.

I BELIEVE that there are few people who, when looking back on their life, cannot discover a time when, had it not been for the example of another, they would not have had the courage to face some particularly hard or lonely stretch of road that lay before them. Just such an example to me was Officer's Charger No. 37567.

It was two o'clock in the afternoon and hot, not ordinarily hot, a type of blinding shimmering heat that dried up the throat and seared the eyes, the type of afternoon on which one's nerves and temper were as brittle as dead leaves. It is only in Spain that I have found this type of heat.

It is symbolical of my mental condition that I shuffled along in the powdery dust of the street gutter. Love, pride, hope and even self-pity, all had gone. I gazed upon life with stony, lack-lustre eyes and empty heart, raising a small cloud of Alcaly dust as I shuffled home in the gutter.

As I reached the Plaza Del Toro a large crowd were collected outside the stadium entrance—it was Bull-fight Day. Past me jogged a gaily clad ill-mounted company, the picadors arriving with the broken-down old horses who were to perform their last service to mankind, whom they had so faithfully served in their different spheres, proud or humble. The last of the line was a tall, big-boned horse with quiet straightforward eyes, though so thin and weak that he scarce could put one foot before another, yet, withal there was an air of quiet pride about him; so, one felt, had he gone through life, quietly, honestly and bravely.

I laughed aloud as I shuffled along in the dust—that was life, no reason, no justice, just a rotten farce, with no beginning, no end and no reason. I plunged my hand into my pocket. I had the equivalent of sixpence, not enough to buy myself a meal, but enough to see a bull-fight. Very well, I should go, why not?

The cheap seats are low down in the stadium, plain concrete, the more expensive are high up and in the shade. Directly below me was a high railing, a wall from which divers tunnels emerged, a circular walk separated from the sanded ring by a stout five-foot wooden wall. The stadium was already full, and a greasy-looking

band in Comic Opera military uniforms commenced to play a rousing march, a buzz of excitement ran through the crowd. When the music had reached a crescendo, a wide gate in the wood barrier was thrown open ; out of one of the tunnels wound a long procession, bizarre and colourful, and even to me slightly exciting.

First rode an aged matador, now too old to fight—his job is to gallop up beneath the box of the President and catch the lace-frilled baton thrown down to him. Behind him walk toreadors and attendants, carrying gorgeous red cloaks. Then follow the picadors on their aged horses. Last of all a splendid team of mules who will drag out their poor thin bodies when their last day is done. Last of the line of horsemen was a heavy picador with a particularly brutal face. He rode the big-boned horse that I had imagined my familiar or simile. Poor old fool, thought I, why put on such a brave show. If you but knew that as a reward for your faithful service you are to be butchered by a bull who in his turn must die. Why, to amuse the public, the world.

But I was wrong. He knew very well. He faced his end with the same quiet courage that he had faced his life, and came out on top. Having paraded once round the arena the cavalcade filed out, as the mules disappeared down the tunnel music ceased abruptly. A hush fell upon the assembled people, not a silence like the night, but a hush charged with electric anticipation, like a forest that awaits the first peal of thunder.

A sudden roar of excitement, and a small black bull, a mass of well-proportioned bone and muscle, tears into the arena, stops with four legs rigid, sliding in the sand ; mid a little cloud of dust of his own creation he gazes round in bewilderment, behind him the gates are closed, closed upon the green field, the pleasant shady trees, closed upon life. It remains to him to make a good fight. Before he goes he must pay the bill, pay for the green grass and shady tree. There is no fear of him defaulting ; he is very stupid but very brave and fierce, behind him a long line of ancestors who have paid handsomely. Even in bulls there is a tradition. The bull-fighter believes that. He will never face a bull whose father has left the ring alive, which occurs very rarely when the crowd wish a particularly brave specimen to live.

All this I saw as I sat on the hard concrete seat in the burning sun. As I watched, something stirred inside me. Had it ever occurred to me that one paid, or did I expect everything to be given to me.

The little dust-cloud had subsided. The bull trotted round the arena pawing, the little rosette fixed through the hide of his haunches fluttered—it just pained him enough to make him angry.

Into the ring leapt a man with a red cloak on his arm. The bull stood still as the man walked directly into the centre of the ring; each examined the other. The matador spread the cloak and fluttered it provocatively, making little sucking noises with his lips. As the bull charged the matador arranged the cloak artistically; with feet still together, he swayed his body and lifted the cloak clear of the bull's horns, he, himself, missing them by a fraction of an inch. With incredible activity, the bull swerved and returned to the assault; just as quickly, with infinite grace, the matador turned, and the operation was repeated. Now one man after another plays the bull, each performs the feat with more grace and judgment than the next, each time it would seem that the bull must catch his tormentor, but there is always that fraction of space between the needle-sharp horns and the little white-washed chapel that adjoins the ring where there waits a priest—waiting to administer the last sacraments. Even the matador must some day pay—so I thought as I sat upon the hard concrete seat.

The crowd is never allowed to become satiated with any one part of the fight, a new phrase is now commencing. Into the arena rides a picador on an aged horse, his left leg is encased in a strong metal case, the reason for which soon becomes apparent. He carries an eight-foot lance, with a short sharp point, that can hurt, but not damage. The picador arranges his horse sideways between the bull and the man with the cloak. The bull charges, the matador dodges away and leaps the barrier. Before the enraged eyes of the bull stands the picador upon his aged blindfolded horse. A scurry of feet, the bull receives the lance-point in his side, and horse and man are a grovelling heap upon the ground. Like a flash, two matadors have appeared with cloaks and have attracted the bull away. The picador extricates himself, his leg unbroken by the bull's horns owing to its metal case. He walks heavily away and is lifted over the barrier. The stricken horse kicks feebly, raises its head and subsides.

Yet another picador arrives on his blindfolded mount—the same sickening performance is enacted. This, says my neighbour, will be the last horse for this bull. Here is my friend, the huge bony horse, with his brutal-looking rider. My criticism has departed, there is a catch in my heart. He trots bravely forth into the ring,

shaking his head, striving to remove the bandage. He has done it. It's fallen off.

My God, you old fool ! Why do that ? At least you might have remained in ignorance. No spurs are necessary to urge the old horse as the picador manœuvres him into position. He seems to know what is expected of him. I could have sworn he looked carefully at the lance.

The matador leaps aside, the bull is charging. Despite the shrill curses of the people behind I am standing on my seat, in a sweat of apprehension. A strange thing happens. The old horse wheels round, facing the bull. In a series of weak and shaky bounds he gallops forward. God knows what the effort cost him. The lance catches the bull in the neck, at least the brutal-looking picador knows his job. The horse sways and staggers at the impact, but the bull is thrown off his course and, missing the horse, crashes into the barrier. In leap the matadors with their cloaks. The picador must be given time to arrange his horse.

He rides past beneath my seat, not ten yards away. On the old horse's side I see a hand, a broad arrow, a number and a letter. He carries the mark of his profession upon him ; it is a mark that I can read and understand. He is Officer's Charger No. 37567. A British ex-soldier. He stood sweating and shaking with weakness and fatigue, whilst the matadors manœuvred the bull ; still his head was held high. It may sound ridiculous but I took off my hat.

'Why ?' demanded the fat Spaniard beside me.

'He is an old English troop horse and very brave,' I replied.

'That explains much,' he answered. 'It is a pity. He will surely be killed this time.'

'That is life,' said the fat woman behind me. And so the story spread down the line. Already he had captured the fancy of the people. As his story spread, excitement reached fever heat. Many followed my example and stood up. Again the matador swayed, side-stepped and leapt the barrier.

Charger No. 37567 was left alone to face the world. He stood sideways on to the bull, but as before he turned, though unable this time to muster a gallop, he braced his tired old legs to stay the shock. The point of the lance caught the bull on the side of his neck, forcing his head away. Staggering, slipping and sliding, horse, bull and rider crashed into the barrier in a cloud of dust. For a moment it was impossible to see what had happened. The crowd were silent with apprehension. In leapt the matadors. By the time

the dust had cleared the matadors had drawn off the bull. The picador picked himself off the ground. Head bowed, but still upon his feet, propped up by the barrier stood Officer's Charger No. 37567, his flanks heaving and every limb a-tremble, he strove desperately to hold up his head. As the picador stumbled heavily over and patted him roughly upon the neck, there arose a great cry from the people.

'Save him ! Save him !'

Midst deafening cheers, whilst the matadors performed incredible feats of daring to distract the bull, the old horse staggered across the ring, almost supported on the vast bulk of the picador, who walked beside him. When, as he reached the gate he raised his head and whinnied shakily, a lump rose in our throats and a silence fell upon us. The rest of the fight remains a complete blank to me.

When, as the sun hung low in the sky and the band struck up, we rose to depart, I can remember asking my neighbour what they would do with the horse.

He shrugged. 'Who knows ? Perhaps the man who catches the baton will fatten him up and use him to ride on those occasions, then again, perhaps they will take him elsewhere to another bull-fight.' He shrugged again.

As I sat by the side of the road outside the town, in the gathering twilight, I felt that a great burden had been lifted from me. The road, the trees, the mountain, the very world looked and was different.

'Everything is fair in love and war,' I reasoned. 'Life is a war. I also have a great love. That which is a crime in peace is often laudable in war' : so in the cool of the night I went silently to the stable behind the bull-ring and I stole Officer's Charger No. 37567, and led him off into the night.

As we toiled up the mountain pass that soon would bring us to the French frontier, we shared a lump of stale bread ; the cool dawn wind came to us like a blessing from heaven.

'My friend,' said I. 'You have done me a great service, henceforth we will walk the roads of the world together ; we shall talk much. Perchance I shall learn much from you, so that in the end, I, also, may learn to pay handsomely.'

MORE FISHERMAN'S LUCK.

BY 'HAFREN.'

A WHILE ago, I vaunted publicly the luck of a fisherman ; and, since then, in spite of superstitious correspondents, who have warned me to do penance with thumbs crossed—since then, I am more convinced than ever that, to an honest fisherman, no luck is bad.

Quite so. While I was writing the statement my ears pricked. I was prepared to hear you ask me to define an honest fisherman, and even to hear you add : 'Are there any ?'—a petty cynicism that I shall ignore. The definition, of course, is simple ; but I advise you to apply for it to the goddess herself. You will readily understand her answer, if you realise that, although she is indifferent to the letter of the law, her jealousy for its spirit is revealed by the joy, or the regrets, in the fisherman's own retrospect.

I hug my own conceit in the matter ; but, since man is frail, I did, during the past season, have occasion to probe my fisherman's conscience when, twelve miles deep in the country, I discovered that my reel had been left at home. Was the rebuff deserved ? Had the goddess waited for this perfect afternoon, in order to make my punishment for an offence more keen ? Then, while taking off useless brogues and waders I recalled a drawing in a *Punch* of long ago, that matched my plight. I suddenly laughed—and all was well.

That, you may argue, merely shows that I am something of a philosopher, or that my temperament is strangely placid. Have it your own way. I, certainly, had no intention of driving feverishly for twenty-four miles, to fetch my reel. I preferred to idle in the sunshine, and trust in compensation. It always comes, if you have kept your temper ; and if the understanding of the method of the goddess has kept you tolerably honest. But you must understand, also, that fishing is not all there is to 'going fishing.' Would you like to fish in a tunnel lit by electric light ?

The scene was a remote 'halt' upon a single railway line built specially for the farming community in the twisting valley and for a hill quarry at its distant end. These ingrates have taken to motor transport ; and their benefactor has fallen into a decline. Still, a modest traffic persists ; and a solitary box wagon had been

left in the short siding, through whose open doorway a pair of martins were repeatedly flying. They were, I found, plastering a nest up in one corner ; and they took no notice of my inquisitiveness. I hope, some day, to learn the sequel ; and, if I know anything at all about railwaymen and birds, I expect that the nest was finished and a family reared, no matter whither the wagon travelled, or to what uses it was put.

Railways often are clothed in beauty ; and it is remarkable how many of our shyer birds are attracted to use them. Not far from the little 'halt,' I had already watched willow-wrens building a nest in a gap between the clinkers beneath a tussock on the edge of a small embankment and within a foot or so of the rail. Trains pounded above it regularly several times a day, and gangers twice stocked up the ballast, some of which rolled down over the nest ; but, in due course, ten young willow-wrens took wing. My chief anxiety was caused by a wandering sow, that appeared to find a peculiar satisfaction in grouting among the clinkers of the embankment. Several times the sound of grunts has fetched me from the water below, to drive the sow, squealing, along the line with clinker-shots ; but I could not always be there ; and I feel sure the brute was responsible for the disaster to a pheasant's clutch of five, near by among the nettles against the boundary wire. I first found the pheasant's nest when seeking a *cache* for my lunch-bag, which I almost dropped upon the back of the hen bird, which merely stared like a dowager at 'this unwarrantable intrusion.'

After inspecting the martins' house-building, I sat in my car and took tea. Little clusters of Jenny Spinners danced above the railway lines ; and when they drifted over the car I noticed that they persistently dropped upon the bonnet and laid their eggs upon its shining surface, no doubt, mistaking it for water. Only a little while before, I had observed May-fly doing the same thing —and that reminds me—

In spite of bewailings from the lordly chalk streams—in witness whereof, a news-cutting entitled 'The Poor Angler' lies before me—I seldom have experienced such a hatch of May-fly as occurred this year. On several streams that I visited they swarmed densely everywhere ; and, on one occasion, while returning home in the half-light, again and again it was like driving through brief snow-storms of big, lazily swirling flakes. May-fly swept in upon us through the windows, and even caused us to slow down, by plastering the wind-screen and obscuring our vision. They were drakes,

too ; not spinners. On that kind and sweetly odoured evening, the illusion was queer. For more than five miles we encountered the little snowstorms ; and it was all the more remarkable, since our road ran uphill and directly away from the stream. There had been no breeze all day, to cause a drift ; and the only water we passed lay in farm ponds. I have heard it said—and mention it for what it is worth—that May-fly do sometimes breed in farm ponds. My own impression is that ours had followed the run of the light-coloured road, just as the Stone-fly do in limestone districts, in mistake for the river. At all events, I have minimised, rather than exaggerated, a treasured experience.

Many years ago, ashore after a four-months' passage in sail, I was travelling homeward in a train with a shipmate, who was as fishing-crazy as I was. And here we were, going on leave for the month of June. He had on the rack a small slatted box containing a *kookaburra*, a laughing-jackass from Australia, that had uttered not so much as a squawk since its capture up-country 'down under.' While the train was waiting in Oxford Station what should fly in through the window and settle on my friend's coat-sleeve but a May-fly. He promptly let out a yell of delight and anticipation : ' Hafren !—it's *up* ! ' That was enough to startle our fellow-passengers ; but more followed. Suddenly, from the rack above, the *kookaburra* chuckled ; then, as if releasing its lungs so long pent up, it awoke the echoes of the compartment and the whole station with its hideous, prolonged, breath-catching cachinnations. Quickly, an excited mob collected on the platform outside ; officials with anxious eyes burst through. Where was the maniac ? Almost helpless with laughter, we could only point to the box on the rack. Now, that laughing-jackass lived happily for four years in a country garden and a potting-shed, but never again was it known to justify its name. I wonder—was it because the little exile never again suffered May-fly magic ? It would, of course, take a jackass in that way.

Ethically, I dislike the annual visitation of the 'ungainly bug' ; although it fetches up monster trout that, other times, ignore a fly, and that are best out of the stream, since, as a rule, they are too old to spawn and, thus, replenish native stock—which should be the ideal, rather than re-stocking from 'foreign' sources. Ethically, again, I tell myself that poundage does not appeal to me ; that the May-fly season spells easy butchery, of which I ought to feel ashamed. In practice, when the wretched, flopping

creature is 'up' I fall victim to the general gluttony in company with my betters. There is no getting away from it. The May-fly is a wizard, his magic an ecstatic demoralisation—but we suffer for it for a while immediately after the debauch, when we return to our 4-x points and 000-hooks, and find everything in our fly-box refused with contumely.

The May-fly it was, however, that taught me how to catch cruisers, or, as they are called, 'time-wasters'—vulgarians that range a pool to snatch their food, instead of taking their place at table like little gentlemen and eating what is put before them. For a cruiser, it is useless to fish the rise, because, by the time one's fly has alighted, the brute has gone elsewhere; and the knowing ones, recognising the signs, go elsewhere also. Time flies horribly fast, they say, when fishing, and not a moment must be wasted. That, of course, is a totally wrong attitude, a confession of ignorance of elementary philosophy. If, when fishing, you consider time at all, you will worry lest you waste it. Then you *will* waste it by flurry, and time will take to its heels.

Well, there is a certain, long and deepish pool in a narrow stream that everyone habitually passed by, labelling it a cruiser-haunt and a waste of time; and there, years ago, pausing in my May-fly butchery, I sat down to study a harlequinade. The fly came down in batches; and, every five minutes or so, the pool boiled with rises so close in succession that a novice might have thought he had found Eldorado. I have seen strong men's hands tremble and their knees sag when first they were confronted with the phenomenon of a cruiser at meal-time in a pool; and I have even led them to their disillusionment, as a part of their education. My own education was now to be improved. Having watched several repetitions of the harlequinade, I became conscious that imaginary lines plotted between the rises made a sort of plane trigonometrical design that varied little. In a word, the cruiser ranged the pool methodically from point to point. Even when no May-fly happened to await him at or near his points of call, I observed a surface-bulge; and, although I did not see him, I knew that he had risen tentatively from his deep rushes. I decided on a point midway, waited until he began again at the tail of the pool, then dropped my May just above the point chosen. By now, the lower part of the pool was ringing to the boil; and, almost immediately, I beheld my fly being sucked into a wide mouth. A slow *one . . . two*—a hardish strike—and, in due course,

the pool was delivered from a pirate bully ; and I had gained an experience that has since been repeated with great advantage. I hasten to add that success depends largely upon the shape of the pool. If it has a 'waist,' you can get your cruiser every time.

The incident recalls a sequel. Another year, late in the season, and with a 'Herefordshire' Alder, I had rid the same pool of the first bully's successor ; was idly smoking and expecting nothing ; when, out of the tail of my eye, I caught a dimple in a little bay opposite, where the bank was hung with a tapestry of low, close-trimmed alder exquisitely reflected in the slightly opaque, greenish water of the pool. A moment or two later, a dim shape floated horizontally upward ; very gently took another dun from the surface ; and faded away down again. It appeared to be a big fish—big for the stream and bigger than the cruiser I had killed ; and, puzzled to account for its presence in the pool, I 'wasted' a whole hour of a precious evening in alternate casting and watching. Dozens of times, the shape floated mysteriously, and always horizontally, upward—to take a natural dun, to refuse my imitation. Then, the quality of the light changed ; the evening grew 'dumb' —the magic hush that sometimes intervenes between a lively summer's day and the real twilight, to ravish mortal man and quicken his perceptions. Behind me, in a coppice-ride beyond the bracken-flat, my brother hooted impatiently—startlingly—on the horn of our hired motor. We had to catch a last train home at a junction. I had finished tying on a rather big Bumble (forlorn hope !), and, now, I pledged myself to one cast and no more. The fly dropped true, but sank in an eddy that drew it out from the little bay. There came a gentle pluck. The moment I felt the fish I knew what it was—a grayling. It weighed $2\frac{1}{2}$ lb., immense for the stream ; and, later on, the owner of the water asked me to let him have it for setting up. Incidentally, in my haste, I had pulled in line by hand, instead of on the reel ; and while taking the fish out of the net I dropped my cigarette on a coil on the ground and burnt through my line—a disaster and a lesson thoroughly deserved and never forgotten.

But the real interest lies in the technical points of the incident. (1) The grayling did not rise once until the cruiser trout had been taken out, but it rose almost immediately afterwards. (2) Because of the remarkable reflection (I could hardly tell where alder ended and water began), the eddy mentioned above, and the water's own tinge, during the whole hour I had been unable to make out

anything more definite than a shape. (3) I did not suspect a grayling, because of its size, and because a grayling's rise is zigzag and like forked lightning, not a horizontal, mysterious levitation, such as I had been watching.

I love grayling, and cannot understand why so many fishermen treat them as vermin. On the contrary, they offer good sport and, when properly cooked, are excellent to the taste, if one has the sense to leave them alone until (say) mid-September, when hen-trout, gravid, greedy, and no sport at all, ought to receive the mercy due to their condition and to the wisdom of providing native stock. At this time, grayling approach their prime; and, given quiet weather and no spates, they extend the fly-fisherman's enjoyment well on into autumn. Fished for 'dry,' they call for real skill, owing to their keen vision and the low angle of the sunlight, which makes the smooth glides like polished glass.

Grayling, as it is well known, usually go in shoals, the majority of which are small and often tantalisingly hard to deceive with a floating fly. Often, too, they share the ground with samlet, which are a nuisance, because samlet will take anything reasonable that is offered. But, nearly always, among or a little apart from the main grayling shoal there are big 'leaders,' which do not rise incessantly with the smaller fish, and whose occasional *golloping*-rise is so like a heavy trout's as to deceive even the expert. Whether or not the leaders show, they are the grayling to go for. Do not try to match the tiny duns that the small grayling and the samlet are taking so greedily. It is the gut that makes the grayling refuse your tiny imitation; their own speed to the rise and their alarm in avoidance that cause occasional foul-hooking. Put on a big Dark Olive (winged)—which, of course, hatches out again in and around October, though so sparsely as to escape notice. The big fly will probably put the small grayling 'down'—and so much the better; but it will fetch up one or more of the leaders, whose eagerness for it (as shown by the *golloping* rise) appears to dull their suspicion of the gut.

Yes, I love grayling fishing; especially when a jolly sun has beamed its way through the lingering, low mist of an October dawn-frost into a firmament of faultless blue, to set the countryside ariot with warmth and colour, red, gold and russet. See that prince in livery strutting in the next meadow. A month ago, master pheasant would have risen with a whirr and a clatter as we approached the fisherman's stile in the hedge. I dare say he

knows the difference between a gun and a fishing-rod, but he is taking no risks, and slithers quietly into the rank herbage at the riverside. Though it be pharisaical, bid him good luck and life. Hark to the loud slap of quice's pinions. They have spotted us from the covert, the wily rascals. No need to be sentimental about them!—but you would be sorry if wild pigeon were exterminated, as many farmers would like. And there is the robin that has been following us, bush to bush. Quarrelsome and a parricide, is he? Well, so it was intended—and, perhaps, it is intended, also, that his faithful, lonely little song should remind you to be thankful in autumn as you were merry and hopeful in spring. The more I see of it, the surer I am that in seeking small mercies one finds the great. What matters, then, a reel forgotten, when a world of nature is offered instead?

Nothing at all. I believe it now, and I believed it on that perfect afternoon while I sat in my car, drinking tea from a thermos, smoking, and letting my thoughts wander in the realm of content.

The strident vocabulary of a magpie aroused me. The villain was perched, not twenty yards away, on the top wire of the railway boundary, jerking itself to and fro in excitement, and apparently screaming revilements at a pair of plovers that were driving its mate across the meadow beyond, toward the poplars in a corner by an old mill. Suddenly my magpie made a bee-line for the middle of the meadow, but, instantly, the plovers checked, swooped back, and drove it to the railway again. Then, in turn, the magpie in the poplars shot over the meadow, drawing the pursuit, while my magpie, perched once again on the wire near me, renewed its antics and its screaming. I fancied, now, that it was offering advice, rather than vituperation; for the other magpie drew the plovers toward a large willow in another corner of the meadow; and, every time the performance was repeated, it chose a new refuge spaced widely from the last one, although my magpie always returned to the wire near me. Thus it went on, a most diverting comedy to watch, but likely to prove a tragedy for the plovers, whose eggs, or chicks, were the object of the clever marauders' persistent tactics. I put an end to the affair by standing up in the car, so that my head and shoulders appeared through the roof-opening. Although the magpie on the wire had its back to me and I made no sound, it fled instantly; so did its mate; and I noticed that the plovers at once gave up pursuit, and both circled quietly to the ground.

I had been tempted to take an easy pot-shot at the magpie with the catapult that I carry for slaying common rats. Often, when standing quietly in the water and waiting for fish to rise, one sees rats slinking along the marge and working the undergrowth like a stoat. A catapult at my age may seem childish and not quite the thing ; but I have a deadly hatred of rats, especially near a beloved stream ; and, too, I am rather proud of my make of catapults—of which the first essential is to train to shape your fork of holly or sycamore while it is growing and long before you cut it. When I was a youngster it was common to see 'forkets' thus tied up in the country hedges ; and I learnt about that, and much more, from the best instructor possible—and he was not a gamekeeper. In the past, I have carried 'catties' up-country abroad, and have made them for friends in various parts of the world ; and, even now, an exhibition of the one I carry provokes requests in strange quarters. Quite recently, for instance, I was asked for one by a certain host of mine, a man of parts and dignity, and a magistrate of several sorts. He said he wanted it against the rabbits from a neighbouring coppice, that infested his lawns and shrubberies. For my part, I hope that there will be no untoward temptation, no distressing sequel—not to mention a blackened thumbnail ; for it seemed to me that he twanged unhandily.

Speaking of magistrates : before this century opened, I used to attend Petty Sessions as assistant to my father, who was Clerk to the Justices ; and at one session catapults had figured in a case of poaching. After the Court closed, the solitary and venerable magistrate described how he had seen boys shooting at the globes surmounting the pillars of his drive gates, and illustrated the action with an imaginary catapult, holding his thumb upright within the fork and pulling the leather against his nose. I turned away to hide my grins, and pretended to put my papers straight, while my father followed the magistrate into the private room behind the bench. Then it was that the Superintendent of Police, who sat alongside, slyly put a hand round me and into my coat-pocket, from which he extracted and held up for the other attendant policemen to see, what was known locally as a 'mon-killer.' Despite my semi-official position, I was very young. I was still regarded (though without malice) as artful and fleet of foot by constables and gamekeepers for miles round . . . but, five minutes later in the police-station yard, you might have seen a burly sergeant and

two youngish, red-faced bobbies shooting for halfpennies with my catapult and my bullets at a target chalked on a government wall ; and the marks around the bull showed that they weren't novices either. Country chaps, you see. Victorian conventions notwithstanding, life was full of fun in those good-humoured, bucolic days —before fishing became so confoundedly expensive and syndicated.

I remember attending County Assizes with my father, who, in his official capacity, was responsible for sending down a prisoner for trial. We sat in the body of the Court, and when our case came on, the Judge (by repute, a ' holy terror ') found fault with the procedure of the magistrates' commitment. After enquiring if their Clerk was present, he lectured my father severely and, I must say, undeservedly. During the harangue, my father, who was rather deaf on occasion, stood with a hand cupping one ear and looking more like a perplexed elderly colonel than a country lawyer pretending a proper humility ; and, at the end, he leant down to me and demanded in military tones : ' Eh ! what did he say ? ' His daring was bad enough, but an astonishing flutter in the corner of his eye nearly finished me off, and I could only hold on tight to my ribs and gape during the hush that followed. Then, a droning of voices beneath the Judge relieved the tension and, mercifully, the case was allowed to go on in its normal course. When it was over, we went out into the forecourt, where a fat, middle-aged, circuit barrister was taking the air in the genial sunlight, with his hands behind his back and gown swishing. Detached from the world, he was humming a tune, but, as we approached, he broke into the words belonging. ' Knocked 'em in the Old Kent Road ! ' he sang with knowing emphasis, then grinned and paused, as if to speak to us. My father stared and passed on ; and, presently, I heard him mutter : ' Can't have that ! —can't have that ! ', which told me plainly that the joke was to be kept in the family.

My contemporaries can fill in the name of the Judge. I will only add that my father was one of the very few who came off best in an encounter with the ' holy terror '—but, then, he too had a reputation of his own, and one that carried far beyond a country lawyer's offices. Incidentally, he did not welcome taking articled clerks, but sometimes he did so for friendship's sake.

All this is not so far apart from ' Fisherman's Luck ' as it may seem ; for filial memory has helped to enlarge and sweeten a philosophy—call it a larger gratitude—for which my chosen title is only a disguise or—if you prefer—a writer's artifice. Why, then,

should I apologise for a digression that, in truth, is nothing of the sort? Besides, I am by no means hard up for more specific, more obvious proof of the contention in my first paragraph: that, to an honest fisherman, no luck is bad. Thus, for instance:

One afternoon in June last, I visited the tiny stretch of water that so fortunately is mine own, with the express purpose of catching a certain big trout, that hitherto had defied and beaten me. He fed in a deepish swirl caused by the pressure of the slow current against the curved, drooping foot of a huge old willow, from whose exposed roots a thick stump stuck out at an upstream angle, its sawn-off end being about two feet above the swirl, that escaped round the willow-foot and immediately became the V-glide of a little ford. Live boughs overhead and close alders on the opposite bank contributed to make casting about as difficult as it could be—not to speak of a floating mat of trailers and submerged roots, beneath which the fish invariably bolted when missed or hooked. I describe the place fully, because I shall have to refer to it again by and by.

On this occasion, owing to a later appointment and delay on the road, I had barely an hour in which to fish. Ten minutes' patience, while standing knee-deep in the ford, had been rewarded with the sight of a greedy rise in the swirl beneath the stump; and I was cautiously flicking out line when, twenty yards below me, without warning, otter hounds burst through the bushes on either side, leaped into the shallows; and in a trice I became the centre of a living cyclone, which, however, swiftly passed on through the pool above and round the bend beyond, leaving me (wet, but unscathed) to contemplate a stream like thick soup with floating brash of all sorts for sippets. From behind the alders a high-pitched voice assured me of its owner's frightful sorrow, but that it would soon be all right again. With such grace as I could muster, I assured him I did not mind, but that, certainly, his time also was being wasted, since the stream up there held no otters. The belief, I add now, gave me pleasure; for my sympathy lies with the otter, which I love; and, though I love the dogs too, I hate their use.

They did not find, as I learnt when I returned to my car, near which hounds were being vanned; but, a few days afterwards, my belief was proved wrong; for, on stepping once again into the tail of the ford, I noticed an otter's pug-marks in a patch of damp earth. They were the first sign that I had seen up there for three years past; and I rejoiced. I even went so far as to wish this

sharer of my water good luck. He had it ; and so did I—as you will soon perceive.

Meantime, concerned wholly with my pet enemy beneath the stump, I waded across the ford and took up comfortable station against the alders on the other bank, whence I could make a back-handed, horizontal cast upstream and into the swirl. The tunnel of greenery was dappled everywhere with light and shade from a six-o'clock June sun ; it was deliciously warm and very quiet, but, rather oddly, fly were scarce, and fish showed seldom. Once again, for fully ten minutes, I waited with my eye for the most part on the swirl beneath the stump, most of which was hidden by the willow-foot. Then, a heavy rise below me took my attention ; and I was marking the spot when, suddenly, there was a tremendous commotion beneath the stump—as if a salmon were chasing its own tail within the limits of the swirl. I could hardly believe my ears or my eyes ; for the little stream doesn't hold salmon—or pike, thank goodness !—and a pound-and-a-half trout is a whale. I had clean forgotten otters ; but, lo ! and behold ! out from the swirl one now slithered, and ran along a little mossy ledge, to disappear into the tangle of roots and undergrowth clinging to the high bank. I had just time to observe that the otter was half-grown, and that a glistening something stuck out squarely in front of one shoulder. Well, I am pretty sure what that something was. For the rest of the season the swirl has held nothing worth mention ; certainly not my coveted foe.

But the cheek of it ! Under my very nose ! I have no doubt that the otter had been lying in wait along the hidden part of the stump for the whole time ; otherwise I must have seen him. In the first moment of stupefaction, I exclaimed that I was condemned ; next, I shouted, ‘ Oh ! good luck to you, you little devil ! ’—then, leant against the alders and gave way to joyous laughter.

What luck !—what *gorgeous* luck !

Even then, it wasn't finished ; for, while driving happily homeward in the twilight, on turning a sharp corner, I almost ran into a brown owl and a tabby cat having a rare old scrap in the middle of the lane. I quickly switched on my headlights, and the cat bolted at once into the hedge. The owl remained scuffling for a moment or two, then flew up straight at my windscreen, which it narrowly avoided.

More fisherman's luck ! Is not my title well chosen ?

THE SACRED MOUNTAIN.

BY FRANK E. HAYTER, F.Z.S.

As a big-game hunter of many years' experience it is, I suppose, somewhat unusual for me to relate anything sufficiently uncanny to come under the category of the queer side of things; but an adventure I had in Abyssinia can have no other solution than that of the supernatural.

The events I am about to relate took place early in 1928. I was at Addis Ababa, enjoying a well-earned rest after a successful, but very difficult, hunting trek to the Chillalo Mountains, in quest of that rare animal, the Nyala, or Queen of Sheba's antelope. I had hoped to rest on my laurels for at least a month, but it was not to be. One hot afternoon I heard voices outside my tent, and there was no mistaking the accent.

Wondering what on earth American visitors could want with me, I opened the flap and stepped out, to be greeted by a young and attractive girl.

'We are looking for a Mr. Hayter, the hunting gentleman,' she informed me. 'Are you Mr. Hayter?'

I agreed that my name was Hayter, and that occasionally I did a bit of big-game hunting for a living.

'Well, sir,' broke in a tall, bronzed man who stood behind her, 'I guess you are the man we have come to see.'

Taking a huge bandana handkerchief out of his pocket he mopped his forehead, entered the tent, and sat himself on my rickety camp-bed. The girl, whom he introduced as his daughter Alice, settled herself on the only chair I possessed, and her father began to talk. He first of all treated me to a detailed history of his ancestry, his own boyhood, courtship and marriage, and then dilated on his passion for anything antique. At last he came to the business that had brought him to me. Blinking at me through his horn-rimmed glasses, he said :

'Now, Mr. Hayter, in this country are sacred mountains—sort of natural monasteries—in which live Abyssinian monks.'

For a moment Mr. John P. Tibbetts, for this was his name, paused; then shaking a long finger in front of my nose he continued :

'Perhaps, young man, you know, and perhaps you don't, that Abyssinia is the most ancient, and the most romantic Empire in the world. What is more likely than that much of its romance and ancient Christian relics are enshrined within these mountain monasteries? At any rate, sir, I mean to explore one, and I am going to pay you to get me to it.'

Mr. John P. Tibbetts saw the smile I could not hide, and rose to his feet.

'Young man,' he said, 'whether you believe what I have told you or not, or whether you think I shan't be allowed inside one of these monasteries, doesn't matter; what I want you to do is to get me, and my little gal, to one I've heard of in the province of Godjam; wait there for us while we try our luck, and bring us back to Addis Ababa again. Name your figure.'

This was certainly 'business,' and before very long we had come to terms. I was to form a caravan, organise the trip and be responsible for the safety of my employers, from the time of their departure from Addis Ababa until their return to the Capital, excepting, of course, any period spent on the mountain. In return for these services, I was to receive a handsome fee. Three days later everything was in readiness, and an hour after daybreak we started.

I warned my employers to be prepared for an exhausting journey, for I knew from past experience what trekking over this vast mountainous region entailed. Mr. Tibbetts, however, waved aside my misgivings with an expressive hand, and informed me that he had been 'in Patagonia, and up and down a few hills before.—What's more,' he added, 'Alice has climbed the Alps in Switzerland, so we are not altogether new hands.'

I must admit that both of them stuck the inevitable hardships of an Abyssinian trek splendidly. Indeed, they seemed to enjoy every bit of it—until we began the descent of the Muger Valley.

I shall never forget their expressions of blank amazement as they gained the crest of the last ridge, and gazed down into the apparently bottomless ravine that sloped almost sheer from where they stood. It was the girl who spoke first:

'Gee! we're not going down there?' she queried, pointing to a narrow, boulder-strewn track which seemed more like an endless, crazy ladder propped against the mountain-side than a path of solid earth.

'I'm afraid so,' I said. 'That's the only way down to the Blue

Nile. . . . We either go down it, or go back ; for there's no other route to Godjam.'

For a few moments she hesitated and then, with a wry smile, prepared for the perilous descent.

I had made the descent into the Nile Valley before, and knew what to do. I ordered all the mules to be freed of their loads, and to be driven on ahead of the muleteers who carried the loads on their shoulders. For two days we stumbled, and sometimes rolled down the precipitous slopes under a pitiless, burning sun. All of us were cut and bruised from contact with sharp-edged boulders ; especially Tibbetts and his daughter, who were not used to this kind of travel. Neither of them, however, uttered a word of protest, although they were obviously suffering from their injuries, and were worried by the intense heat, and clouds of flies which were with us day and night. At last, on the evening of the third day, we reached the Muger River, and enjoyed the first really decent bath we had had since leaving Addis Ababa. We had gazelle for supper that night, and in the morning felt wonderfully refreshed. Mr. Tibbetts was 'full of beans,' and before the sun was up put his head through the flap of his tent and yelled out to me to know, 'How many more days before we get to the mountain ?'

'Three—if we are lucky,' I shouted back.

'That's great !' he replied. 'Let's be moving.'

As a matter of fact we were lucky, for instead of having to negotiate the Blue Nile ourselves we struck a spot where the Abyssinians had rigged up a ferry of bamboo rafts. Then came another three days of climbing, a descent through a wild gorge, and, at last, we stood on the undulating tableland from which rose the sacred mountain. Our first glimpse of it gave no indication of its size, or of its curious shape, for around its base was a thin white mist, and the summit was completely hidden in clouds. But, as we watched, the mist and cloud gradually dispersed, and the mountain was clearly revealed.

It was, I computed, some three thousand feet in height, and obviously of volcanic origin. Rising from the plain, it resembled a huge cone, but some hundred feet from the summit it suddenly flattened out, revealing a lava-ringed crater. From the crater ran huge slabs of some grey rock, and between their twisted and jagged edges I could discern deep ravines—boulder-strewn, and intersected by walls of stone. We were about three miles away from the nearest slopes, and as the heat was, if anything, more intense

than in the Nile Valley, we decided to make camp under a mimosa-tree, and start for the mountain early the following morning. The only member of the caravan who appeared to be immune from the blazing sun was Tibbetts, for during the whole of the sweltering afternoon he was constantly emerging from his tent, and gazing at the mountain through an immense telescope. When the light was so bad that he could no longer see his cherished mountain, he came into my tent and began to talk about it.

'Now see here, mister,' he said, 'there's no telling what we shall discover in that monastery. Why, sir, we might even find souveneers of the Queen of Sheba, and antiques dating from the time of Solomon.'

And so he rattled on until his daughter intervened, and drove him away to his bed; reminding him that he had to be ready to trek early in the morning.

Before I went to sleep that night I had the satisfaction of knowing that I had now fulfilled the first part of my contract; for here were John P. Tibbetts and his daughter safely arrived at the sacred mountain. Whether he would be allowed inside that crater, which according to rumours was the actual abode of the monks, was not my business. But the more I analysed Tibbetts' colossal self-assurance the more uneasy I began to feel about the result of his determination to explore the crater. I doubt whether I should have given the matter a second thought had he been going on the journey alone, for he was obviously asking for all he was likely to get; but there was his daughter to consider, and, to say the least of it, the back of beyond in wildest Abyssinia was hardly the ideal place for a young and extremely attractive white girl. All things considered, I decided that John P. Tibbetts and his daughter should not go alone; I would accompany them. Afterwards, for some reasons, I was glad I did so; for many others I certainly was not.

Our journey to the foot of the mountain was quite uneventful. By the time we had struck the dense forest belt which encircled it we were hot and thirsty, but under the trees there was shade, and a small stream. Now that the great adventure was about to start in earnest, Tibbetts was almost frantic with expectancy. Allowing us barely time to get a hasty drink from the inviting stream, he strode on ahead, rifle in one hand and a long stick in the other. His daughter, who was unarmed, and I, with a twelve-bore shotgun and heavy-calibre revolver, followed his lead, though the going

was none too smooth. As we left the trees, and progressed up the foothills, it became worse, until we were all clambering up a defile that twisted in and out of fallen stone and gravel.

After about half an hour of this gruelling climb, all that remained of the pathway was a small gully that rose from our feet and ascended almost vertically to a point where it disappeared behind an overhanging ledge. At last Tibbetts stopped, and, sitting on a boulder, took off his heavy boots. I had been contemplating doing the same, for parts of the track were so steep, and the foothold so precarious, that our nail-shod boots were less than useless. Following Tibbetts' example, the girl and I removed our boots, and I tied the laces together and slung both pairs round my neck. After a monkey-like scramble, we arrived at a point some five hundred feet below the crater, whence we had a wonderful view of the surrounding country.

So far, the only signs of life we had seen were traces of python, and scores of red-breasted Gelada baboons. In fact, I was beginning to think that these creatures would ultimately prove to be the only denizens of the mountain, when I heard Tibbetts shout. Looking upwards in the direction of his pointing finger, I could see a tall, bearded man, dressed in black flowing garments and wearing on his head a curiously-shaped skull-cap. For a moment he stood there with his right arm upraised in what I imagined to be a gesture of warning, and then disappeared. Nothing could now restrain Tibbetts, who scrambled upward with wonderful agility for a man of his size, until finally he gained the edge of the crater. I had all my work cut out in assisting his daughter up the remaining slope, but at last we were on the top, and gazing on to a strange scene.

Directly in front of the small mound of reddish dust on which we stood, there rose a massive doorway of rudely-cut stone blocks, its entire surface covered with strange, carved designs, but each having a cross as the main decoration. Driven into the stone of one of the uprights were two heavy iron staples; but of the door itself there was no sign. Framed in the doorway, was the far side of the interior of the crater, which appeared to be honeycombed with caves or passageways, for I counted at least forty of these openings, each of them surrounded with rough stonework.

For a moment I was puzzled to find a reason for this great rabbit warren until I saw the head of a bearded man emerge from one of the smaller holes. For a second he contemplated us, stretched

forth an arm and waved us back, and shouted something I could not understand before he withdrew into the darkness again.

'I guess we've struck the monks' retreat all right,' said Tibbetts, 'but I never expected them to live in the ground like a lot of rabbits. Let's have a closer look at them.'

Without more ado, he strode through the stone doorway, and along a narrow path which led to the inner edge of the crater itself. Running in a semicircle, and parallel to the rim, this path gradually sloped away, and wound round the crater walls until it reached the spot where the stone-edged holes began.

Telling the girl to stay where she was, I set off to follow Tibbetts, but when I arrived at the spot where the crater proper began he was not to be seen. Calling out to him, I rounded a turn in the path, only to come up against the rocky walls that overhung the low entrance to a cave. Of Tibbetts there was no sign, neither could I hear any sound of his footsteps. There was nothing to be done but await his return, for I was certainly not taking the risk of calling to the girl to follow me into the cave to search for her hare-brained father. Returning to her I told her to rest awhile, for no doubt he would soon return.

It was then about four o'clock, and the heat was terrific. We could have found relief from the scorching sun in the cave, but though I was tempted on many occasions to lead the way to its cool shade something seemed to hold me back, though what it was I could not tell. I was not afraid of being attacked by the mysterious dwellers in the mountain, nor of the cave being the haunt of python, though I knew from what I had already seen that the whole mountain was infested with them. And yet the sense of revulsion that I felt against entering the cave would soon have to be overcome, so far as I was concerned, for if Tibbetts did not return fairly soon, I should have to go and fetch him.

Slowly the hours dragged by, and at last I looked at my watch; it was nearly six o'clock, and soon darkness would be upon us. To contemplate the descent of the mountain that day was now out of the question. As for making camp—well, we had absolutely nothing with which to do it, not even a stick of wood to light a fire. There was, however, an overhanging ledge of rock which might provide some shelter from the mist that was now drifting around us, but before settling down there I must find Tibbetts. I took my electric torch and revolver, and very reluctantly made for the cave. I had to bend low to enter, but once inside my torch

revealed a lofty passage, which at first sight appeared to have been hewn out of the rock by human agency, but as I examined it more closely I could see that the tunnel was an ancient watercourse, draining the high ridge that lay on the eastern slopes of the mountain. I must have penetrated to a distance of some fifty feet along the passage, all the time conscious of some unseen presence, when I was confronted by a massive door of wood studded with hundreds of iron knobs. It was fastened on the inside, and though I banged on it with the butt of my revolver until the tunnel reverberated with the noise, no answer came to my summons, and I retraced my steps to where I had left Miss Tibbets.

I found she had moved to the shelter of the overhanging ledge, and when she saw me come back alone her nerve deserted her for the first time since we had left Addis Ababa, and she hid her face in her hands. I tried to cheer her up, but it was a feeble effort, for while I was telling her that her father was no doubt perfectly safe, and would turn up at any moment, the sun went down leaving us in utter darkness. Even if he did come now he would never find us.

How long we sat in that rocky recess, huddled together for warmth, for the enveloping mist felt like an icy spray that numbed our limbs and set our teeth chattering, I do not know; but it must have been hours—hours with no sound or light to pierce the velvety darkness.

Suddenly a light shone out on the far side of the crater. I judged it to be somewhere in the vicinity of the stone-edged holes where we had seen the second bearded man, but I could not be certain.

'That's your father returning,' I said to the girl. 'I told you he'd be all right.'

She sprang to her feet and eagerly called out; but there was no reply. Slowly the light grew brighter, and, as we watched, it became the centre of others, that at first glimmered weakly and then gradually increased, until the entire crater appeared to be lit by scores of small lamps. We watched the scene with a sense of mixed amazement and fear, for these lights were no will-o'-the-wisps, but very definitely man-made illuminations; but try as we might not a sign of any human beings could we see.

Telling the girl to follow me, I stepped as silently as possible across a stone-covered path and, slowly, with my heart pounding in my throat, began to edge towards the narrow path that wound

round the inside of the crater. Keeping as much as possible to the shadow cast by massive rocks, we at last came to a spot directly facing the lights, but hidden from view from any unseen watcher from the holes by a huge boulder. For some minutes I stood watching the ghostly glow of the lights, my nerves worked up to such a pitch that I was not unduly surprised when a most amazing thing happened. As if controlled by some electric switch, the lights dimmed, sank lower, and then flickered out; but in their place appeared, almost level with our eyes and suspended above the very centre of the crater, a luminous mist. It increased in intensity, sometimes changing to a brilliant purple and sometimes to a dull red, but all the time expanding and growing more intense. We could now easily distinguish the whole of the opposite side of the crater, to a depth of nearly fifty feet, and while I was gazing spellbound at this strange phenomenon, I heard Miss Tibbets gasp and felt her clutch my arm.

Then I saw the cause of her fear. Standing on the circular pathway, about forty feet away from us, was an enormously tall, bearded man. He wore the peculiar-shaped skull-cap of the men we had seen earlier in the day, black robes, and sandals. Slowly he raised his arms above his head, a performance which he repeated twice, and then commenced a mumbled jargon of words in a language that was quite strange to me. Finally he turned his back in our direction, and made some sign with his hand towards the holes in the crater face and, almost immediately, a score of skull-capped heads appeared from these like jacks-in-the-box! The whole scene was so amazing, so unnatural, that the exhibition of black magic—I cannot describe it as anything else—we were about to witness, did not come as the tremendous shock one would have expected. I suppose, if the truth were told, we were both so paralysed with fear that our minds were past registering surprise, or any other emotion.

As we watched the increasing and ever-changing light play upon the figure of the tall man, who still stood with his back to us, and on the bearded faces of the other monks, the glow seemed to rise to a point of yellow flame, and then curved upwards and outwards until it split into two portions. In the open space between, a white beam of light gradually spread out, and on its incandescent surface shadows began to play. Slowly they became more marked, until they took on the character of smoke clouds that, instead of drifting with the wind, seemed to move around as if imprisoned in

a gigantic glass bowl. For some minutes this movement continued, and then, from among the deeper shadows, a face appeared. At first it was unrecognisable, but as it took form definite features were visible. There was no mistaking whose they were. *Framed, as if in some enormous crystal, appeared the form of Tibbetts!*

I heard his daughter shriek, and felt her slip to the ground, where she lay moaning. I was as scared as she was, and could feel my knees knocking under me, yet there was some power that impelled me to watch the fiery scene that was becoming more detailed every moment. I was now able to see the complete head and shoulders of Tibbetts, even to the buttons on his shirt, and the cartridge-belt slung round his shoulders. He was lying in a reclining position almost flat on his back, his eyes closed and an expression of complete happiness on his face. My first impression was that he had been killed by these wild fanatics, and that it was his dead body I could see, but, presently, I saw his arm move and he put his hand over his eyes as if to shut out the glare of the intense light which enshrouded him. Soon his entire body was visible, and while I was staring at his feet to discover if his boots were still unlaced, as they had been when we last saw him, the light began rapidly to fade, until there was just a dim glow which gave way to utter darkness.

Without knowing it, I found myself groping on the ground for the girl, who was semi-conscious and unable to move more than to beat the earth with her outstretched hands. She was moaning like a soul in torment when I picked her up, and in the darkness stumbled along the rocky path which led through the great stone doorway towards the shelter we had taken up earlier in the night. Here, after some petting from me, she grew calmer, and, her thoughts still on her father, she managed to speak of him.

'I shall never see him again . . . he is dead,' she confided. 'In the morning we must search for him.'

'Not we,' I said as firmly as I could. 'I must take you to camp, and come back myself for him. You have had enough of this terrible place.'

'As you will,' she sighed resignedly. 'Shall we try and get back now, rather than sit here?'

'By all means let us try,' I replied, 'but I don't think we'll like the look of that steep bit. It's inky dark, you know.'

We got up, and made our way slowly to the head of the chasm up which we had crawled the previous day with such enthusiasm.

We reached the crater's lip, and I sent a beam of light from my torch into the darkness. By its rays I could see the winding path until it was lost in the depths below. One glance was sufficient to tell me that any attempt to descend the almost vertical rock ladder in the darkness would only end in disaster; so we sat on the dusty margin of the crater's lip and waited for the dawn.

Ages seemed to pass before the heavy mist that had drifted about us throughout the night took on a brighter hue, and then slowly dispersed as the sun broke through the clouds. It was light enough now for us to commence the descent, and slipping and sliding down crevices, rounding immense boulders, and crawling over ridges of rock that crossed our path, we at last reached the spot where we had halted—some five hundred feet from the top of the mountain—on our upward journey. We paused for a moment to take breath, and were preparing to set off once more, when a shout came down to us from above. Looking up, I saw four or five bearded monks, clothed in black *shammas*, and all wearing the curious skull-caps. Supported by two of their number was the limp body of Tibbetts, but even at that distance I could see he was still alive. His head lolled to one side, but he moved it feebly, and his arms, hanging loose, seemed under control, but he appeared unable to stand.

Before I could stop her, his daughter had snatched the automatic from my belt and was climbing up the chasm calling wildly to him to: 'Just wait for me,' for she was 'sure going to get you!' I soon overtook her, and relieved her of the automatic, for if she had shot one of the monks they would have thrown her father down to certain death. However, I kept it in readiness as I crawled towards the strange group. When about thirty feet away from the spot I halted, under cover of a big rock, to recover my breath for a final dash. I hardly remember what I expected to find; certainly not a very puzzled Tibbetts sitting alone in the lava dust and rubbing his eyes with his hand. Of his captors there was no sign.

Gazing at me like a drunken man, Tibbetts babbled something about a bunch of keys, and rising unsteadily to his feet looked around him with unseeing eyes. Then with a big effort he pulled himself together, regarded me intently, and finally looked at his daughter who had just scrambled to where we stood. Slowly a look of recognition appeared in his eyes, but it faded as quickly as it had come. But Tibbetts was gaining physical strength every

minute, and I decided that the time had come to get away, once and for all, from this devil-ridden place.

Of the journey down the chasm little need be said except that twice Tibbetts collapsed, and in his fall pulled his daughter and myself with him. At last, after a nightmare journey, we arrived at the foothills, bruised and bleeding from scores of cuts, the result of our falls on the jagged rocks. It was not until then that I was able to signal to the caravan, when a shot from my revolver and the waving of a handkerchief tied to the barrel of the shot-gun soon brought the headman and boys running to our help. Before midday we had reached camp.

How different from the confident and smart Americans who had set out the previous day my employers now looked. Mr. Tibbetts would have shamed the raggedest, seedy tramp that ever found place in the pages of a comic paper ; and the girl, who only twenty-four hours earlier had made a perfect picture in her well-cut breeches and bush shirt, was now covered from head to foot in a thick layer of dust, and with her garments torn to shreds was in no better condition.

For a week Tibbetts was like a man who has had a very bad dream, and is making frantic efforts to escape from the horror of it. On the eighth day he slept for sixteen hours, and when he awoke a great change was noticeable. He was his old dictatorial self, that is until he suddenly looked up at the sacred mountain. For a moment he stood lost in contemplation ; then he looked at me as if he were about to say something. What it was I never knew, for the next moment he turned and gave the order to trek —to Addis Ababa !

Note.—A possible explanation of the extraordinary lighting effects on the mountain-top might be that the monks have control of some natural gas, given off by this extinct volcano. This, being inflammable, might be ignited or extinguished at will. The appearance of Mr. Tibbetts' image might have been caused by a series of mirrors, after the style of Meers. Maskelyne and Devant's 'floating lady.' Failing that, the whole business was supernatural.—THE AUTHOR.

LITERARY ACROSTICS.

THE Editor of THE CORNHILL MAGAZINE offers two prizes to the most successful solvers of this acrostic. The winners will be entitled to choose books to the value of £1 from Mr. Murray's catalogue. If several solvers send solutions of equal merit, the two whose answers are opened first will win the prizes.

Beginning with the next number of the CORNHILL, our scope of Literary Competitions will be enlarged. The August issue will offer its readers a series of six quotations, and invite them to locate them; the September number will ask them to supply quotations appropriate to certain themes; an occasional acrostic will appear, and there will probably be some further variety in the fare.

DOUBLE ACROSTIC No. 119.

'Far-called, our navies melt away;
On dune and headland sinks the fire:
Lo, all our pomp of yesterday
Is one with _____ !
Judge of the Nations, spare us yet,
Lest we forget—lest we forget !'

1. 'In the green and silent valley,
By the pleasant water-courses,
Dwelt the singer ____.'
2. 'I was of Thessaly king, there ruled and a people obeyed me :
Mine to establish the law, theirs to obey it or die.'
3. 'And ne'er did Grecian chisel trace
A Nymph, a ____ , or a Grace,
Of finer form, or lovelier face !'
4. 'This fairest creature from _____ spring
Thus moved through the garden ministering.'
5. 'The very spice of life,
That gives it all its flavour.'
6. 'Let still the woman take
An _____ than herself : so wears she to him,
So sways she level in her husband's heart.'
7. 'Dower'd with the _____ of _____, the scorn of scorn,
The love of love.'

RULES.

1. Only one answer may be sent to each light.
2. Every correct light and upright will score one point.
3. With his answer every solver must send the coupon that is printed on page iv in the preliminary pages of this issue: and he must be careful to give also his real name and address.
4. Solvers should not write either the quotations or the references on the same paper as their answers. It is not necessary, or even desirable, to send them at all.
5. Solvers who write a second letter, to correct a previous answer, must send the complete solution as they wish it, and not merely state the desired alteration.
6. Answers to Acrostic No. 119 should be addressed to the Acrostic Editor, THE CORNHILL MAGAZINE, 50 Albemarle Street, London, W.I., and must arrive not later than July 20. No answers will be opened before this date.

ANSWER TO NO. 118.

1. B	row	N
2. I	mag	E
3. R	heim	S
4. D	us	T
5. S	oul	S

POEM: Longfellow, *Birds of Passage*. Flight the First.
Tales of a Wayside Inn.
The Birds of Killingworth, verses 13 and 17.

LIGHTS:

1. R. Browning, *The Pied Piper of Hamelin*.
2. Macaulay, *Lays of Ancient Rome*. *Horatius*, lxv.
3. Barham, *Ingoldsby Legends*. *The Jackdaw of Rheims*.
4. Shakespeare, *Cymbeline*, iv, 2.
5. Campbell, *Battle of the Baltic*.

Acrostic No. 117 ('Events Before'): The prizes are won by Rev. F. Burgess, Brigg Vicarage, Lincolnshire and Mr. Arthur Stuart Miles, College House, Tenbury Wells, Worcestershire, whose answers were the first correct ones opened. These two solvers will choose books to the value of £1 from Mr. Murray's catalogue.

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